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communist program

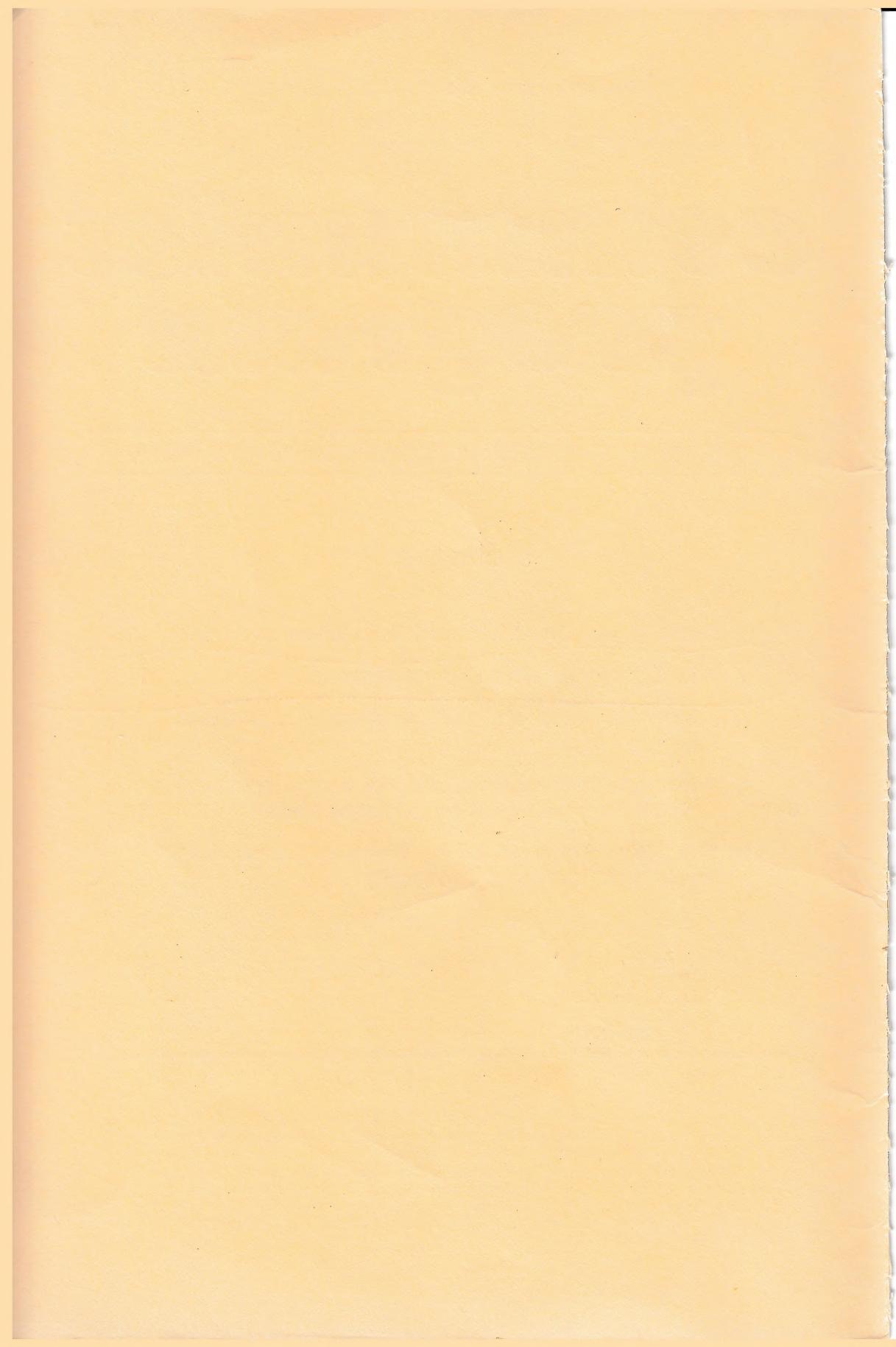
ORGAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTY

CONTENTS

● Once Again On Crisis and Revolution	1
● The Course of World Imperialism	11
● Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle	35
● The Cycle of the « Awakening of Asia » is Closed Only to Reopen Again on a Higher Level	50
● The Bitter Fruits of Thirty Years of Democratic Peace and Capitalist Prosperity	52
● Summaries of Our International Press	56
● The I.C.P. — Some Publications of the I.C.P.	59

WHAT DISTINGUISHES OUR PARTY

is the political continuity which goes from Marx to Lenin, to the foundation of the Communist International and its defence against degeneration; the struggle against the theory of « socialism in one country » and the stalinist counter-revolution; the rejection of Popular Fronts and of the Resistance blocs; the difficult task of restoring the revolutionary doctrine and organization in link with the working class, against personal and parliamentary politics.



Once Again On Crisis and Revolution

A little more than a month after the « representatives of the most revolutionary section of modern mankind » had gathered in Moscow for the First Congress of the Communist International, Lenin and Trotsky responded to one of the questions that had been posed to Marxist theory by the harsh voice of facts, a question that was to be cynically exploited by the Mensheviks and centrists of the entire world. It was not by chance that the responses of these two great revolutionaries were significantly parallel. To paraphrase Lenin, the question can be formulated this way : why was it as easy as « lifting a feather » to begin the socialist revolution « in Russia, the country of Nicholas and Rasputin », but « infinitely more difficult » to begin it in Europe (with it inversely being infinitely easier to *continue* it on its course in Europe than in Russia) (1). Or to paraphrase Trotsky : how can we explain this phenomenon which seems inexplicable at first sight, namely that « in contradistinction to the direction of capitalist development from West to East, the proletarian revolution unfolds from East to West » (2), that is to say, from the most backward countries of Europe (Russia, then Hungary and finally Bavaria) towards the most developed ones. Why did it happen that the revolution followed a path going in an inverse direction to that of the impetuous movement of the export of financial capital (and correspondingly of the capitalist transformation of the essentially agrarian lands still shackled with pre-bourgeois relationships and modes of production), a path which culminated on the threshold of fortresses *so much more difficult to seize*, those of European and world imperialism. Does this « incongruity » (as Trotsky said) or this « contradiction » (as Lenin spoke of it) constitute a refutation of Marxism and a condemnation of the October Revolution ? Or does it furnish, on the contrary, a brilliant confirmation of the first and an historical validation of the second ?

If we refer today to these twin texts of 1919 it is not to dwell with that side of the question which concerns the « contradiction between Russia's backwardness and its 'leap' beyond bourgeois democracy » (3),

(1) The quotations are from the *Political Report of the Central Committee* at the 7th Congress of the R.C.P. (B), (*Lenin, Works*, Vol. 27, p. 87). Lenin takes up the same idea in *The Third International and its Place in History*, April 15, 1919, *Works*, Vol. 19.

(2) L. Trotsky, « En Route : Thoughts on the Progress of the Revolution, *Izvestia*, April 29 - May 1, 1919 - Reprinted in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*. New York, Monad Press, 1972, vol. I, p. 61.

(3) Lenin, *The Third International and its Place in History*.

the theoretical explanation of which harassed Lenin's mind at his Moscow work desk and Trotsky's on the train as it travelled from one end of the immense network of the civil war to the other, like a tireless shuttle weaving the thread of victory. Our aim instead is to find the key to the opposite side of the question, a phenomenon which appeared yesterday but which appears *still more* today: that is, the explanation of the « contradiction » between the very advanced degree of capitalist development in the West and the fact that it obstinately remains in the morass of bourgeois democracy; the explanation of its horrible delay in leaping *beyond* this morass towards the socialist revolution. This is a subject of burning urgency which we have dealt with before (4) but which life itself demands that we take up again in line with those formulations of over a half-century ago which possess the power and force of all the greatest Marxist writings.

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Both texts answer this question identically with Trotsky dealing with it more completely on the *theoretical* level and Lenin answering it essentially polemically and politically. Trotsky wrote the following in analysing the situation in England, which is the « *oldest capitalist country in Europe and the world* » and at the same time « *the most conservative from the standpoint of the proletarian revolution* », especially during the last half-century :

« While Marxism teaches that class relations arise in the process of production and that these relations correspond to a certain level of productive forces; while Marxism further teaches that all forms of ideology and, first and foremost, politics correspond to class relations, this does not at all mean that between politics, class groupings and production there exist simple mechanical relations, calculable by the four rules of arithmetic. On the contrary, the reciprocal relations are extremely complex. It is possible to interpret dialectically the course of a country's development, including its revolutionary development, only by proceeding *from the action, reaction and interaction of all the material and superstructural factors, national and world-wide alike, and not through superficial juxtapositions, or through formal analogies* » (5).

It is precisely the accumulation of an entanglement of former objective and subjective factors which, in the first post-war period, prevented the curve of development of the revolutionary crisis from corresponding directly to the curve of development of the economic crisis within countries which, from the point of view of the productive forces, were the most ripe for revolution. Thus, through one of the numerous « freaks » (or so it seemed) of the historical dialectic, the explanation of the « incongruity between England's capitalist development and her socialist movement, as conditioned by a temporary combination of historical forces » was precisely in this fact (which Marxists certainly do not consider to be a reason for discour-

(4) « Crise et révolution », in *Programme Communiste* no. 62

(5) Trotsky, *op. cit.*, p. 53 (Our emphasis).

ment) : owing to her « early entry onto the path of capitalist development and world robbery », England has assured a privileged position « not only for her bourgeoisie but also for a section of her working class » and has accumulated an arsenal of counter-revolutionary resources that had been amassed from its long parliamentary tradition and from the art, acquired through it, of utilizing the most refined ways of material and ideological corruption of the oppressed classes.

In the same way the *seemingly* mysterious process of the complex interplay of class relations in France becomes clear once we consider : 1) the « extremely viable, tenacious, stubborn and petty bourgeois » French village, 2) the « bond of common remembrances and traditions between a considerable section of the French working class and the left elements of bourgeois democracy » which had its roots in the lasting memories of 1789 and 1793, and 3) the typical ambivalence of a ruling class that on one hand seduced « the popular masses, including the workers, by a dramatic display of anti-dynastic, anti-clerical, republican, radical and other tendencies » and, on the other hand, « availed itself of the advantages accruing from its primogeniture and from its position of world usurer in order to check the growth of new and revolutionizing forms of industrialism within France herself », thus exporting her capitals abroad. And Trotsky adds : « An analysis of the economic and political conditions of the French evolution, and furthermore not only on a national but an international scale, can alone provide an explanation of why the French proletariat, split up after the heroic eruption of the Paris Commune into groups and sects, anarchist on the one wing, and « possibilist » on the other, proved incapable of engaging in open revolutionary class action, of struggling directly for state power ».

Finally, a clear parallelism existed between Germany's dizzy capitalist development after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 (a development late compared to Britain and France but an advantage *precisely for this reason* because it allowed for the possession of an ultra-modern technology and a « science » of management and organization unknown to the first-born children of the industrial revolution) and, on the other hand, the no less extraordinary growth of the organized labor movement and of the standard of living of the great masses. This upsurge of the labor movement saw its end in the transformation of German social democracy, the jewel of the Second International in its best days, into « a living... incarnation of organizational fetishism » *in the service and in the interest of the capitalist counter-revolution* (6).

(6) « History has been so shaped », Trotsky wrote in a preceding article, « that in the epoch of imperialist war the German Social Democracy proved — and this can now be stated with complete objectivity — to be the most counter-revolutionary factor in world history. The German Social Democracy, however, is not an accident ; it did not fall from the skies but was created by the efforts of the German working class in the course of decades of uninterrupted construction and adaptation to conditions prevalent under the capitalist-Junker state. The party organization and the trade unions connected with it drew from the proletarian milieu the most outstanding, energetic elements, who were then molded psychologically and politically. The moment war broke out, and consequently when the moment arrived for the great historical test, it turned out that the official working-class organization acted and reacted not as the proletariat's organization of combat against the bourgeois

But for Trotsky this explanation could not limit itself to the analysis of the peculiarities of the historical development in the major Western countries. Its scope was *more general* and almost assumed the appearance of a law (this concept will be taken up again at the Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921) :

« Capitalist production in its « natural » evolution is constantly expanding reproduction [...]. Expanded capitalist production deepens capitalist contradictions. The proletariat grows numerically, [...] becomes organized and educated, and thus forms an ever-growing power. But this does not at all mean to say that its class enemy — the bourgeoisie — remains at a standstill. On the contrary, expanded capitalist production presupposes a simultaneous growth of the economic and political might of the big bourgeoisie. It not only accumulates colossal riches but also concentrates in its hands the state apparatus of administration, which it subordinates to its aims. With an ever-perfected art it accomplishes its aims through ruthless cruelty alternating with democratic opportunism. Imperialist capitalism is able to utilize more proficiently the forms of democracy in proportion as the economic dependence of petty-bourgeois layers of the population upon big capital becomes more cruel and insurmountable. From this economic dependence the bourgeoisie is able, by means of universal suffrage, to derive — political dependence.

« A mechanical conception of the social revolution reduces the historical process to an uninterrupted numerical growth and a steadily mounting organizational strength of the proletariat until, comprising « the overwhelming majority of the population », the proletariat without a battle, or virtually without a fight, takes into its own hands the machinery of bourgeois economy and the state, like a fruit ripe for plucking. In reality, however, the growth of the proletariat's productive role parallels the growth of the bourgeoisie's might. As the proletariat becomes organizationally fused and politically educated the bourgeoisie is in its turn impelled to perfect its apparatus of rule and to arouse against the proletariat ever-newer layers of the population, including the so-called new third estate, *i.e.*, the professional intellectuals who play a most prominent role in the mechanics of capitalist economy. *Both enemies gain in strength simultaneously.*

« The more powerful a country is capitalistically — all other conditions being equal — the greater is the inertia of « peaceful » class relations ; all the more powerful must be the impulse necessary to drive both of the

state but as an auxiliary organ of the bourgeois state, designed to discipline the proletariat. The working class was paralyzed, since bearing down upon it was not only the full weight of capitalist militarism but also the apparatus of its own party. The hardships of war, its victories, its defeats, broke the paralysis of the German working class, freed it from the discipline of the official party. The later split asunder. But the German proletariat remained without a revolutionary combat organization. History once again exhibited to the world one of its dialectic contradictions : precisely because the German working class had expended most of its energy in the previous epoch upon self-sufficient organizational construction, occupying the first place in the Second International both in party as well as trade union apparatus — precisely because of this, in a new epoch, at the moment of its transition to open revolutionary struggle for power the German working class proved to be extremely defenseless organizationally » (Trotsky, « A Creeping Revolution », *Pravda*, April 23, 1919, *op. cit.*, p. 45).

hostile classes — the proletariat and the bourgeoisie — out of the state of relative equilibrium and to transform the class struggle into open civil war. Once it has flared, the civil war — all other conditions being equal — will be the more bitter and stubborn, the higher the country's attained level of capitalist development; the stronger and more organized both of the enemies are; the greater the amount of material and ideological resources at the disposal of both » (7).

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However this picture of such prophetic clarity which in fact gives the reasons both for the « revolution which failed » (or which in truth did not even begin in the West at the time) and for the genesis of fascism after the social-democratic led counter-revolution, should not be mechanically applied to the situation today. This would be the case if we made an abstraction of the collection of factors that alter the unstable equilibrium between classes and it is something which, on our part, we must guard against. For more than a half-century the inertia of the democratic and reformist traditions has grown to the same extent that the Stalinist counter-revolution *disorganized* the proletariat as a class force and distorted or prevented its « *political education* ». Certainly, the proletariat has increased numerically, but « numbers weigh only in the balance, if united by combination and led by knowledge ». These two fundamental requirements are *inseparable* because neither organization without knowledge nor knowledge without organization can have any weight on the balance of the class struggle, and it is precisely these two factors which were destroyed by the joint work of Stalinism and social democracy.

The French national tradition may have grown pale, Westminster may no longer be the dazzling light it once was, the luster of the German « organizational fetishism » may have grown tarnished through the enforced division of that nation; but other material and ideological resources to enslave, to stupify, to corrupt and to paralyze the exploited class have taken their place which are even more subtle and insidious and therefore more tenacious in their effects (for instance « democracy » in the shop, in the factory, in the school, in the neighborhood, in the town council, in the region, etc.). The myth of the sovereign individual who is consulted by means of the ballot is more and more denied by the growing concentration and centralization of the capitalist economy and of its apparatus of domination. The myth of the « fatherland » is more and more being denied by the international character of capital. Yet these two myths live, in a tenacious inertia, within the « inverted conscience » of the labor organizations.

The whole experience of both of the world post-war periods can be summed up in two lessons: 1) the capitalist « peace » is only a whole chain of conflicts constantly springing up on the local, regional and even continental level, and 2) the internal reforms continuously turned

(7) *En Route...*, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

out by the bourgeoisie are rendered vain, even when they achieve a minimum of accomplishment, because of the growing uncertainty of the ground on which they lay. However, what is propagated more than the ideology of peaceful co-existence based on « equitable » exchanges ? What is more institutionalized than the practice of « contractual politics » in regard to wages, employment and the « guarantee » of rights which takes place between the trade unions, the organizations of management and the government ? These devices no longer are purely superstructural factors, they are themselves *objective* material forces, deeply rooted and incorporated in the « system ». They are instruments for the mobilization of the working class *against itself*, such as even the merely verbal cudgel of the foreman in the great automaton of the mechanized factory described by Marx. They are vehicles of the subtly reformist work which, with its thousand-and-one « social » measures (such as social security and public relief), provides the zest for the pickup of the economy after the periodic blood baths. As we have written in one of our texts, « where industrial production flourishes [these reformist measures] create a new type of economic reserve for the worker, a small material guarantee which can be lost, analogous in a certain sense to that of the artisan and the small peasant ; the worker therefore has something to risk and (as Marx, Engels and Lenin have recognized before in the case of the « labor aristocracy ») this makes him hesitant and even opportunist at the moment of the trade union struggle and, worse still, at the moment of the strike and of violence » (8). Thus, he who thinks he can measure the degree of maturity of the preliminary conditions for the revolution according to simple statistical diagrams showing the internal contradictions of the existing mode of production and neglects to consider the massive weight of the *counter forces* stubbornly acting within the working class, would fail to understand the terrible gap still dividing the economic crisis and the proletarian revolution.

The amplitude, the profoundness and the duration of the devastations committed by Stalinist and social-democratic opportunism can be measured by considering a period of fifty years of recurring crises, even if it is only a general overall picture. When Trotsky wrote these lines we have quoted, the force of inertia of social conservatism persisted but it could not transform, as has been done today, the organized labor movement into a heap of ruins and the post-war bourgeois world into a paradise of orderly reconstruction under the banner of the *affluent society* and the *welfare state*. And it is true that the revolution in the ultra-ripe capitalist countries had been « infinitely more difficult to begin » than in « barbarian Russia » for having clashed with the enemy bulwark of the « strong government » which was at first democratic, then fascist. But it was at the cost of enormous efforts that the bourgeoisie (and its social-democratic lackeys) extinguished this flame at its birth. Stalinism's victory with its cry of « stabilization of capitalism » was followed a little more than two years later by the American and the world « Black Friday » of 1929 ; the short-lived uprisings of this period did not bring forth the proletarian revolution

(8) *Partito rivoluzionario e azione economica* [*The Revolutionary Party and the Economic Struggle*], 1952 — Published in *Partito e classe*, Edizioni il programma comunista, Milano, 1972 — French translation in *Le Proletaire* n° 121.

but Nazism's bloody ascent. Then came the war, which was not even resisted by an outcry (as Trotsky had expected, forgetful of what he had written in 1919 and 1921). On the contrary, a flood of proletarian blood was offered in a useless sacrifice in the name either of «socialism in one country» or universal democracy. It was under these conditions that the second post-war period was born, that orgy of an unprecedented accumulation of capital on the ruins of a massacre, that bacchanal of a *strong* and at the same time hypocritically «generous» democracy. On the plane of the immediate organizations of the working class, a path to a new cycle of integration in the state was opened. This was made possible by the super-opportunism of the parties which controlled these organizations, since these parties did not combat this integration but in fact aided it. And this in itself opened the way, on the economic and political level, to a renewed cycle of capitalist accumulation and concentration. Corresponding to the increasing weight of dead labor is an increasing numerical weight of living labor but while the movement of the first is aggressive, the second is almost always in a state of rest.

In 1951 our Party stated that we were at the deepest point of the downturn of the political movement and that a revolutionary renewal was conceivable only after many years. We wrote the following: «The length of the present period of downturn corresponds to the severity of the wave of degeneration as well as to the ever-larger concentration of enemy capitalist forces. On one hand, Stalinism embodies the worst characteristics of the two preceding [opportunist] waves and, on the other hand, there exists a process of capitalist concentration which is by far superior to that which immediately followed World War I» (9). Perhaps it would be more exact to say that the two phenomena *are a condition for one another*. On one hand, the process of capitalist concentration and accumulation was able to start all over again on an unprecedented scale because the world party had already been destroyed, that is to say the vital organ of the working class, which is the only class capable of resisting capitalism with its «everyday struggles» for the increase in wages and the reduction in the hours of work, and capable of crushing it later in a revolutionary civil war. And on the other hand, opportunism was nourished by the unhindered renewal of this accumulation and concentration, flourishing thanks to the «social expenses» of the newest productive boom.

With the international communist movement in a state of paralysis from 1926, the United States was able to *emerge* (with arduous effort) from the crisis of the «Black Friday» by putting into practice, with the New Deal, the politics of a collaboration between government, management and the unions which from then on became a ritual. In the year 1974-1975 capitalism has *entered* into the crisis with this same collaboration *already functioning*. If it can pretend to «guarantee» wages, pensions, and employment, *this is because it has been assured of its survival* a long

(9) *Tesi caratteristiche del partito* [The Party's Essential Theses], 1951 - Published in *In difesa della continuità del programma comunista*, Edizioni il programma comunista, Milano, 1970 - French translation in *Défense de la continuité du programme communiste*, Editions Programme Communiste, Paris, 1973.

time in advance. But this is not all. When the crisis is in full swing, the cry that is heard from the heart of the unions and the « workers » parties is more domestic investment, social reforms, an end to the waste of public money, etc. This differs only in form from that which the bosses launch : « Stimulation of the Economy ! », « A Greater Productivity ! », « A Strong Government ! » (with this government certainly still being democratic, but only more vigorous against criminality, absenteeism and parasitism at the present, and against any possible revolutionary upsurge tomorrow). In the hour of peril, capitalism returns to the same methods it used in the epoch of the transition from manufacture to big industry when, as Marx recalled, Dr. Ure yelled (after Cunningham) that « Order must in one way or another be established » and « Arkwright created order » (10). But the modern Arkwrights need the indispensable support of « working class » spokesmen who call for « responsibility », « self-discipline » and « co-management of the crisis » at the level of both the individual enterprise and the nation. Didn't Berlinguer, the Secretary General of the Italian C.P., repeat for the thousandth time that « administrative and political efficiency, stringency and stability in the interests of the Italian people [and it is not just in Italy but in all other countries of the world that the Berlinguers repeat this] can be guaranteed today only by turning left, that is to say through the *objectively irreplaceable* contribution of the Italian Communist Party with its links with the working classes and with its qualities of honesty, competency and loyalty towards its allies and unselfishness and *passionate devotion* to the real interests of the workers and the nation » (11). Not only did opportunism restrain from interfering with capital's monstrously enlarged accumulation, but it gave it a helping hand !

That is why even the economic struggle of resistance against capital is so slow in reviving. That is why, after the blood bath of the second imperialist war, capitalism could accumulate a gigantic quantity of productive forces (and, alternately, of destructive ones) without that class which has been¹⁰ historically called¹¹ to crush it even simply, trying to authoritatively and definitely take possession of it ; without it even recovering its own program, the principles of its own strategy and tactics, and its own party organization. That is why there has been an awful delay of the political class crisis in relationship to the social and economic crisis of capitalism.

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Some may say to us that the simple fact of acknowledging this delay is to recognize defeat. However this objection is hardly better than the reasoning of those who criticized Lenin and Trotsky in 1921 (and above all these two who had been the most intolerant in regard to the demagogic proclamations) for having warned that we must not have the illusion that the bourgeoisie of the advanced capitalist countries, after having been condemned by the tribunal of history, would simply wait for the execution

(10) *Capital*, vol. 1, chapter XIV, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1970, p. 368.

(11) *L'Unità*, 16-2-1975.

of the verdict. They claimed that this warning was evidence that Lenin and Trotsky had lost all faith in the explosive potential of the post-war crisis and in the revolutionary potentialities of the European proletariat (12).

For Marxists, historical facts as well as statistical figures know neither optimism nor pessimism. They simply signify a harsh recollection of the *always vast and today immense tasks* which must be faced and accomplished in confronting an adversary whose tentacles, thanks to opportunism, are very deeply entwined around the members of the working class. These tasks must be performed in line with well defined strategical and tactical positions, as well as according to the relationships of force and their perspectives of development. In the long run, the economic crisis will act as an « accelerator » on the antagonisms which smoulder, still unexpressed within the heart of the capitalist mode of production and bourgeois society. The frantic burst which the forces of social conservation try to impress on the renewed cycles of production and enlarged reproduction of capital will heighten the opposition between the volume of the latter, on one hand, and, on the other, the narrowness of the *private* nature of the appropriation of the products and the *national* basis of their production which seeks a place on a world market teeming with far from peaceful competitors. It will upset an equilibrium that has been realized through great difficulty, thus aggravating the always existing disequilibriums, destroying the economic and social « guarantees » which had appeared eternal and causing the « material reserves » to vanish which even the proletarians thought had been acquired forever as so many « rights » engraved on tablets of bronze. Slowly but with brusque jolts it will rouse the economic struggle from its lethargy and will strain to break the forces which would try to discipline this struggle by crushing or containing it.

That is why, from now on, the inertia of the factors which delay the renewal of the class struggle must be courageously looked in the face. Today more than ever there is no worse defeatism than the irresponsibility of those who cry: « There is no more place for opportunism ; it can no longer exist ! » or « The objective conditions for the revolution are all present ; *all that is missing* is only revolutionary leadership ! ». The first thesis is false and as such is paralyzing ; as for the second the absence of a revolutionary leadership, even if this was all that was lacking, is far from being a mere trifle, because it represents more than half of that whole of conditions necessary for a revolution. As Lenin explained in 1921, « the revolution is not made to order ; it develops ». Or as we wrote in one of our texts in the same year, « One cannot create revolutions, one leads them ». But « to develop them » and « to lead them » means to have been able to prepare oneself for them in time. This preparation can neither be achieved in isolation nor can it limit itself to a theoretical, political, and organizational formation of well selected « cadres ». It is effected through a daily confrontation with the enemy forces, whether

(12) It is not by chance (nor is it a question of « personalities ») that the most seething critics of the time, the theoreticians of the offensive at all cost and in all situations, later fell to the bottom of the ladder. First of all was Pogany who reappeared in the U.S. under the name of Pepper and became the propagandist for the « Farmer Labor Party » of Senator La Follette before ending up as second fiddle to Stalin in the struggle against the Left Opposition.

it is those that sabotage the most modest struggle for a less miserable wage, for a less beastial workday, for an unemployment relief which would not be tantamount to a death sentence ; or whether it is those that channel the dispersed economic struggles, compatible with the existence of the bourgeois regime, into the conservative bed of democracy, thus preventing them from passing through that *qualitative leap* to the general political battle to crush the bourgeois state. It is cemented by battling the « inertia » of the trade unionist struggle, in order to assure a minimum of class autonomy for this struggle and in order to arouse within the most combative proletarians a sense of the antagonism between capital and labor, an antagonism which has been clouded by a thousand ideological veils and by all the material « benefits » that have been given to the workers. In short, it will be accomplished through a difficult *re-ascent* beginning at a *very low point* of social tension and maintaining a clear — but never demobilizing — consciousness of the present and future responsibilities which this implies.

Capitalism can recover from the present crisis — whose date we had exactly foreseen — only by creating conditions for still greater and deeper crises and also, at the outermost limit, for a third World War, which today is only a threat but which tomorrow could become a ferocious reality. If there is a « train which must not be missed » it is not that of a revolutionary crisis of which, as some irresponsible people pretend, all the objective conditions exist — *except one*, which of course is the essential one. Instead that which must not be lacking is the preparation of the elementary subjective preconditions for the revolution. These preconditions do not fall from the sky ; they spring from the naked ground of social conflicts and only so if the party, as embryonic as its physical force may be, fertilizes this soil with its action, tenaciously fighting for the immediate objectives as well as for the final aims of the proletarian movement, accepting the field of the economic struggle but building *in it and beyond it* the groundwork of the class war for communist revolution.

This is the « great occasion » which, in spite of all adversities, the present economic crisis offers the proletarian vanguard.

The Course of World Imperialism

(The report published below has been presented at the General Conference of the Party, May 1975. The statistical data have been updated to include those available as of September 1975.)

After thirty years of bourgeois « prosperity » — a prosperity measured in the sweat of the working class and in the blood of peoples who have been massacred by imperialism — capitalist production is struck once again by a general crisis. The ruling classes thought that by abolishing all of the obstacles to the development of commercial exchanges and to the free circulation of capital they had finally achieved conditions for the stability of capitalism and had driven away the spectre of the convulsions which periodically paralyzed the whole productive machine. But that which they attributed to the sobering up of the capitalist monster rid of its childhood maladies, or to the final achievement of an imaginary mastery over its mechanisms, was in reality only a momentary respite. With its massive destructions of capital, the blood bath of the second imperialist conflict had been a true shower of youth for world capitalism. But as Marxism had foreseen and predicted, the three decades of frenzied accumulation and of the development of the productive forces could only lead and have only led to a new period of conflicts and crises — and these conflicts and crises, if the proletarian revolution has not previously imposed its own solutions, can only lead to a new imperialist war.

The Necessity of Capitalist Crises

The bourgeoisie has always pretended to explain the economic crises by the existence of obstacles to the free development of capital. Once it is rid of these obstacles — which according to the bourgeoisie are inherited from the past or else caused by human ignorance — then everything would work perfectly well. Opportunist reformism, whose theory is in fact fundamentally the same, reproaches the ruling class for not having surmounted these obstacles, for being guilty of « bad management » of the capitalist machine which it itself claims to know how to manage in order to avoid the dangers. In reality we must search for the cause of the crises neither in the external obstacles to the development of capital nor in the incompetency of its managers but instead in the heart of the capitalist system itself ; it lies in the contradiction between the productive forces developed by capital and the bourgeois production relations, in the antagonistic nature of a mode of production which can only develop the productive forces in an enormous way by giving their products a form such that the system must periodically violently reject them. While vast proletarian and semi-proletarian layers are abruptly plunged into poverty in the heart of the most developed capitalist nations and while vast areas of the planet vegetate in

backwardness and slow death, capitalist production finds itself suddenly paralyzed because it cannot find markets ! The explanation of this revolting mystery resides in the very nature of capital : capital is only *value* seeking to generate value. Capital produces products which can only have the form of *commodities*, that is to say of use values which are at the same time *exchange values*. These commodities are not produced with the aim of satisfying the needs of human beings but in order to realize a certain surplus value on the market : that is to say, they are produced with the aim of being sold for money at a certain price and therefore with a certain profit in order to be thus retransformed into a money-capital superior to that advanced at the beginning, then once again into productive capital in order to begin the cycle of capitalist accumulation all over again ... and thus it continues. Overproduction does not signify that too many means of production and consumption have been produced in relationship to the needs of society. It signifies instead that the market — whose capacities of absorption in relationship to the requirements of the valorization (self-expansion) of capital are only known *a posteriori* and on which new masses of commodities from individual or collective producers are ceaselessly thrown — is no longer in a position to pay the price, and therefore the profit, that these commodities « normally » should yield. But commodities are only a metamorphosed form of capital. Behind the overproduction of commodities in relationship to the value that the market can yield, there is nothing other than the overproduction of capital in relationship to its own needs of self-expansion or valorization. In short, the capitalist production relations themselves hinder the self-expansion of capital. As Marx wrote, « the *real barrier* of capitalist production is *capital itself* » (1). In other words, capital as a relation of production hinders the self-expansion of capital as a productive force tending to develop in an unlimited way.

In proportion to the development of the capitalist mode of production, which is accompanied by the increase of the organic composition of capital and the growth of productivity, there is a sharpening of this contradiction with the fall of the rate of profit : the latter expresses, in effect, precisely the degree of valorization of capital, and its tendency to fall shows that this valorization historically becomes more and more difficult. The revolt of the productive forces of capital against the capitalist production relations — that is to say the mercantile relations, capital and wage labor — inevitably bursts out into crises of capitalist production :

« Too many means of labour and necessities of life are produced at times to permit of their serving as means for the exploitation of labourers at a certain rate of profit. Too many commodities are produced to permit of a realisation and conversion into new capital of the value and surplus-value contained in them under the conditions of distribution and consumption peculiar to capitalist production, i.e., too many to permit of the consummation of this process without constantly recurring explosions. »

« Not too much wealth is produced. But at times too much wealth is produced in its capitalistic, self-contradictory forms » (2).

The very existence of capital therefore is only a succession of periodic crises in which all the contradictions accumulated by the capitalist mode of production erupt in a more or less violent way. In Volume I of *Capital* Marx describes this cycle which inevitably recurs, with all its consequences for the working class :

« The enormous power, inherent in the factory system, of expanding by jumps, and the dependence of that system on the markets of the world,

(1) *Capital*, Vol. 3, International Publishers, New York, 1967, p. 250.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 258.

necessarily beget feverish production, followed by over-filling of the markets, whereupon contraction of the markets brings on crippling of production. The life of modern industry becomes a series of periods of moderate activity, prosperity, over-production, crisis and stagnation. The uncertainty and instability to which machinery subjects the employment, and consequently the conditions of existence, of the operatives become normal, owing to these periodic changes of the industrial cycle. Except in the periods of prosperity, there rages between the capitalists the most furious combat for the share of each in the markets. This share is directly proportional to the cheapness of the product. Besides the rivalry that this struggle begets in the application of improved machinery for replacing labour-power, and of new methods of production, there also comes a time in every industrial cycle, when a forcible reduction of wages beneath the value of labour-power, is attempted for the purpose of cheapening commodities » (3).

Periodic crises therefore are not « accidents » in the life of capital : they are necessary and inherent to it just as breathing is for the life of a human being. They regularly dash to bits the advantages which capital pretended to « guarantee » to the working class in periods of expansion ; they make uncertainty and instability the *normal* situation of the working class and periodically worsen its living conditions, since crises always result in throwing a part of the proletarians in the street and in lowering the wages of the whole. This simple passage of Marx inflicts a formidable lashing to all the opportunists who pretend that capital and its state could « guarantee » something to the working class or that it is in the interests of the working class to « defend the national economy » or the « enterprise », whereas these very national economies and enterprises defend themselves precisely through layoffs and wage reductions.

Periodical Recurrence of Crises and the Cycle of Capitalist Production

The periodic crises of capital give a cyclical movement to the life of capitalist production, which consists of a succession of periods of medium activity, of prosperity, of overproduction and of crisis and stagnation. In Volume 2 of *Capital*, Marx shows how this cycle materially takes shape :

« As the magnitude of the value and the durability of the applied fixed capital develop with the development of the capitalist mode of production, the lifetime of industry and of industrial capital lengthens in each particular field of investment to a period of many years, say of ten years on an average. Whereas the development of fixed capital extends the length of this life on the one hand it is shortened on the other by the continuous revolution in the means of production, which likewise incessantly gains momentum with the development of the capitalist mode of production. This involves a change in the means of production and the necessity of their constant replacement, on account of moral depreciation, long before they expire physically. One may assume that in the essential branches of modern industry the life-cycle now averages ten years. However we are not concerned here with the exact figure. This much is evident : the cycle of interconnected turnovers embracing a number of years, in which capital is held fast by its fixed constituent part, furnishes a material basis for the periodic crises. During this cycle business undergoes successive periods of depression, medium activity, precipitancy, crisis. True, periods in which capital is invested differ greatly and far from coincide in time. But a crisis always forms the starting point of large new investments. Therefore, from the point of view of

(3) *Capital*, Vol. 1, International Publishers, New York, 1967, p. 453.

society as a whole, more or less, a new material basis for the next turnover cycle » (4).

The tendency of fixed capital (plants, machinery, etc.) to become heavier and heavier is a fundamental law of the capitalist mode of production which expresses the increase of the organic composition of capital linked to the growth of productivity and which results in the tendency to lengthen the life of fixed capital. But on the other hand, fixed capital often undergoes a «moral» depreciation, that is to say it becomes technologically outmoded because of the creation of new processes and new machines before being materially worn out. The celebrated «competitiveness», i.e. the forward race which is spurred on by competition, requires fixed capital to be replaced while it still could have long years of service. One can imagine the enormous waste of social labor caused by this race for accumulation. The result of these two opposite tendencies, in the epoch when Marx wrote, was a cycle where the average life of fixed capital was ten years.

In reality, the duration of life of fixed capital is very different according to various branches of industry and the various techniques, and it would be absurd to imagine that every ten years all the capitalists would simultaneously renew their equipment. But the crisis always forms the starting point of a large new investment, or in other words the movement of investment is one of the instigators of the periodic cycles. Is there any reason to be surprised in this? Certainly not. This law is in perfect coherence with another law of capitalism demonstrated by Marx and recalled by Lenin in many polemics against the Russian populists (5), namely that the development of capitalist production grows essentially on account of means of production, or in other words that department I, which produces the means of production, is the true *motor* of capitalist production. Incidentally, here is another argument of petty-bourgeois and opportunist economics which Marx has already annihilated: could the crisis, as the opportunists claim, «be avoided» through the increase of «popular consumption»? But «popular consumption» is quite incidental to the functioning of the capitalist machine and therefore it is the last thing that its agents would worry about; it is not the motor which could set the whole machinery moving again! As for increasing it — that is to say improving the conditions of life of the proletarians — this is something that can only be achieved through the class struggle and not through pieces of advice or petitions addressed to the exploiters state by the servile reformist and parliamentarian puppets.

The movement of investment is not the only intervening factor in the cycles of production. There are other factors, as Marx enumerated :

«With accumulation, and the development of the productivity of labour that accompanies it, the power of sudden expansion of capital grows also; it grows, not merely because the elasticity of the capital already functioning increases, not merely because the absolute wealth of society expands, of which capital only forms an elastic part, not merely because credit, under every special stimulus, at once places an unusual part of this wealth at the disposal of production in the form of additional capital; it grows, also, because the technical conditions of the process of production themselves — machinery, means of transport, etc. — now admit of the rapidest transformation of masses of surplus-product into additional means of production. The mass of social wealth, overflowing with the advance of accumulation, and transformable into additional capital, thrusts itself frantically

(4) *Capital*, Vol. 2, International Publishers, New York, 1967, pp. 185-6.

(5) Notably, *On the So-called Market Question* (1893), *Works*, Vol. 1; *A Characterization of Economic Romanticism* (1897), *Works*, Vol. 2; *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899), *Works*, Vol. 3.

into old branches of production, whose market suddenly expands, or into newly formed branches, such as railways, etc., the need for which grows out of the development of the old ones» (6).

And Marx goes on to say :

« If the low price of these commodities first results in new markets being opened up for them and in the enlargement of old ones, their over-abundance progressively constricts the general market up to the point where they are abruptly rejected. The commercial vicissitudes thus combine themselves with the alternating movements of social capital which in the course of its accumulation either undergoes revolutions in its composition or increases on the basis of the already achieved technical level. All these influences contribute to provoking sudden expansions and contractions of production » (7).

The commercial vicissitudes, the over-abundance of commodities, and the constriction of the markets following their expansion are only the manifestations, through capitalist competition and anarchy (or according to Engels, *planlessness*), of the contradiction between the development of the productive forces and the relations of production : as soon as the markets open up, commodities are produced in such quantities and sold at such prices that they are over-abundant in relationship to the capacities of the market to absorb them. All the phenomena inherent to the development of capitalism result in the sharpening of this contradiction by allowing it to manifest itself unhindered : credit instantaneously mobilizes the existing capitals bringing a flood of new capitals with each boom and it thus allows the overproduction of capital and of commodities to manifest itself still more completely and more rapidly ; the technical progress which allows money-capital to be transformed into productive capital in a flexible and rapid way, and the rapidness of transportation which allows for the acceleration of the realization of commodities and the reconversion of commodity-capital into money-capital, all contribute to the same effect ; it is the same as concerns the increases of productivity which allow for the opening up of new markets and the « expansion of the old » through the lowering of prices. The mechanisms of competition among the capitals combine with the movement of renewal and growth of fixed capital, thus causing the alternating periods of expansion and contraction which are the very life of capitalist production : slow recovery and investment ; acceleration of the recovery with the interaction of the various branches of production ; flow of capitals, feverish investments, frenzied speculation in all spheres, or in other words, a boom ; glutting of the market and drastic reversal of the situation ; crisis and depression. Once this movement has come into being it repeats itself mechanically, with each crisis marking the end of one cycle and the starting point of another :

« As the heavenly bodies, once thrown into a certain definite motion, always repeat this, so is it with social production as soon as it is once thrown into this movement of alternate expansion and contraction. Effects, in their turn, become causes, and the varying accidents of the whole process, which always reproduces its own conditions, take on the form of periodicity. But only in the epoch where mechanized industry, having established sufficiently deep roots, exercises a predominant influence on the whole of the national production ; where thanks to it, foreign trade begins to take precedence over internal trade ; where the world market successively annexes vast areas of the New World, Asia

(6) *Capital*, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 632.

(7) Translated from the French edition of *Capital*, Vol. 1, chapter 25, paragraph 3 (*Le capital*, Livre I, Editions Sociales, tome III, Paris, 1950, pp. 76-77). This passage can be found only in the French edition which has been revised by Marx. It does not appear in the German or English editions.

and Australia; and where the number of industrial nations entering into competition with each other is sufficiently numerous — only in this epoch can we date the beginning of the recurring cycles whose successive phases encompass years and which always result in a general crisis that marks the end of one cycle and the starting point of another» (8).

In other words if crises are an absolute necessity for the capitalist mode of production taken at its most abstract level, their recurrence in a cyclical movement appears historically, once capitalism has reached a certain degree of development and expansion, through the combination of a series of phenomena arising from the laws of capital and their application in a certain concrete geographical, historical and political material context. This movement draws in those nations which are in competition with each other, that is to say those nations which are tightly linked together through their relations of exchange and competition on the world market. It can be manifested in a violent manner, as Marx and Engels noted and analyzed in 1847, 1857, and 1867. It can diminish or even apparently vanish at certain moments, as Engels noted for example in regards to England in the second half of the 19th century when competition from British industry's young continental rivals was so strong, at certain moments, that the depression was continuous in England (9). But this situation is the exception. In his report on «The World Economic Crisis and the New Tasks of the Communist International» at the 3rd Congress of the Comintern (10), Trotsky quoted a table published by the London *Times*, January 1921, which showed that between 1783 and 1921 the British economy had gone through 16 cycles, that is to say 16 crises and 16 phases of «prosperity»; each cycle on the average covered approximately 8 2/3 years. According to the official U.S. government statistics, the American economy has gone through 17 cycles from 1892 to 1969 (the deepest of which was obviously that of the great crisis of 1929) with an average duration of 4 1/3 years (11).

This subject has caused great rivers of ink to flow from the pens of the bourgeois economists who evidently have difficulty in reconciliating this reality of the contradictory and convulsive development of capital, which regularly throws millions of workers in the street, with the vision (which it is their job to diffuse) of a harmonious mode of production that brings prosperity and security for all. But for all those whose vain mission consists of attempting to foresee and alleviate the convulsions of the capitalist machinery, there can be no hiding from the reality of the cycles. For instance the very official Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which includes all the developed capitalist countries of the western world, has begun to devote an entire part of its monthly statistical bulletin to the cyclical indicators for the manufacturing industries. Likewise the official American and British «experts» have developed a composite index of the *leading indicators*, that is the economic indicators

(8) The first two sentences are quoted from *Capital*, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 633. The last sentence, which does not appear in the English or German editions, is translated from the French edition of *Le capital*, Livre I, op. cit., p. 77.

(9) «Foreign industry, rapidly developing, stares English production in the face everywhere, not only in protected, but also in neutral markets, and even on this side of the Channel. While the productive power increases in a geometric, the extension of market proceeds at best in an arithmetic ratio. The decennial cycle of stagnation, prosperity, over-production and crisis, ever recurrent from 1825 to 1867, seems indeed to have run its course; but only to land us in the slough of despond of a permanent and chronic depression» (Preface to the English edition of *Capital*, 1886. *Capital*, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 6).

(10) Reprinted in *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Monad Press, New York, 1973, p. 201.

(11) U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Long-Term Economic Growth, 1860-1970*, Washington, 1973.

which are intended to predict some months in advance the trend of the business situation (12). The poverty of bourgeois « science » ! The most powerful imperialist power in the world is reduced to attempting to predict the economic future six months in advance — and it doesn't succeed even in this (13) ! What an admission of powerlessness by the bourgeoisie in front of its own mode of production !

After the second imperialist war, the cycle did not appear immediately throughout the world because the needs of reconstruction after the massive destructions of goods, and thus of capital, had created enormous outlets for American capitalism and had given a new youth to the capitalisms which had been entirely or partially destroyed. Then the alternating expansions and contractions began to manifest themselves in all the western capitalist countries, as we have shown in the figures and graphs for the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and Japan (14). But at this point the cycles were out of step in the different countries : expansion for one could correspond to a recession for another, which to some extent allowed each national economy to « limit the damage », thanks to its exports, when it was in difficulty. But this very mechanism must inevitably tend to synchronize the different cycles. With the end of the 1960's, with reconstruction achieved, with the principal customs and monetary barriers abolished (and notably the return to the convertibility of the principal currencies), with the German and Japanese imperialisms rebuilt on the economic plane and entering *en force* on the world market, the era of bourgeois illusions engendered by an unprecedented phase of good business and high profits gave way once again to the era of confrontations and crises. The monetary and commercial war of 1970-71 (the devaluations of the dollar, the American-Japanese confrontation, and the monetary chaos) was the product of a still relatively mild crisis centered on the United States, with a slackening or decline of industrial production, a contraction of world commerce, a growth of unemployment, etc.

After this « little » crisis, which instigated western capital to attempt to accelerate East-West trade in the hope — a vain hope — of escaping the more serious crises which were on the horizon, there has been an economic recovery and then a boom which culminated in 1973-1974 in all the major countries and which brought a high inflation, soaring prices of raw materials, etc. Through commercial exchanges on the world market, the economic cycle had become synchronized ; the simultaneous (and therefore all the more accentuated) boom has unavoidably led in 1975 to a crisis which is all the more profound. The world capitalist economy has resumed its characteristic spasmodic course with more and more abrupt jolts.

The Illustration of the Present Crisis

● Industrial Production

The simplest barometer of the development and of the convulsions of capitalism is the index of industrial production which is calculated in all the

(12) For the O.E.C.D., see *Main Economic Indicators*, Part 3, « Cyclical indicators ». For the United Kingdom, see in *Economic Trends* the section on « Cyclical Indicators for the United Kingdom Economy » which has been included since March 1975.

(13) According to *The Economist*, April 19, 1975, the American leading indicators have not in the past « been gloomy enough about the economy's prospects » (!), that is to say these indicators did not allow them to foresee the duration and the depth of the crisis.

(14) See *Programme Communiste* no. 64, pp. 39-43.

developed countries. In previous works of the party, this index has been used in order to demonstrate the historical dynamic of capitalist development, which is more rapid for the younger capitalisms and which slows down with the development of capital. Among other things this allowed us to demonstrate the senselessness of the Stalinist theories which attributed the high growth rates of industrial production in Russia to an imaginary «socialism», when in actuality this phenomenon was due to the youthfulness of Russian capitalism, as had been clearly demonstrated by the later decline of the growth rate. Capitalism develops the productive forces in an uneven manner, more rapidly for the younger capitalisms and more slowly for the older; this uneven development (in which other material, historical, geographical, and political factors intervene) constitutes the material basis for the changes in the inter-imperialist balance of power which result in confrontations and wars that alternate or coincide with crises of production.

When observed over a long period, the index of industrial production confirms the law of the senescence of capitalism and of its uneven development. Thus in the period from 1955 to 1973 the *average* rate of the annual growth of industrial production for the six major western countries has been the following (15) :

Japan	:	13.1 %
Italy	:	7.2 %
Germany	:	5.8 %
France	:	5.8 %
United States	:	4.6 %
United Kingdom	:	2.9 %

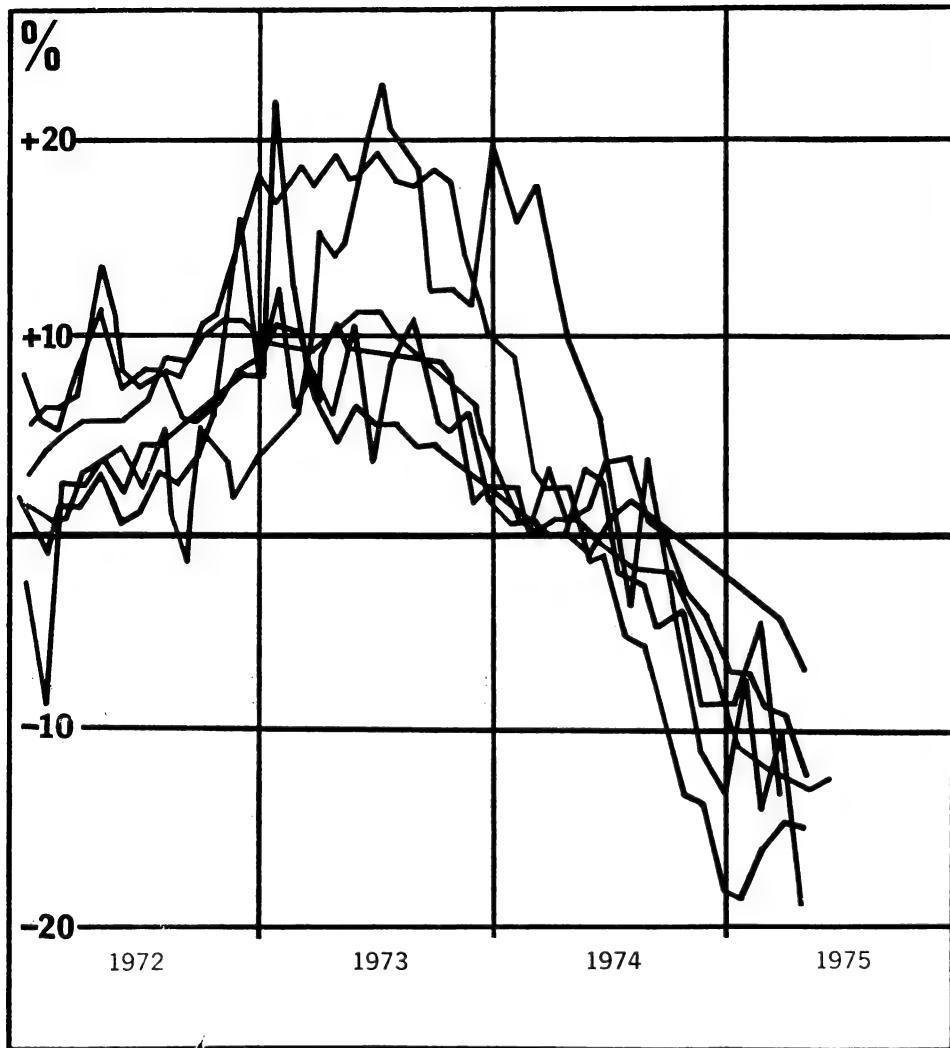
The cycles of expansion and crisis for each country represent, more or less, oscillations of the economic seismograph on one side or the other of the trend line characterizing the growth of the productive forces. In giving the average annual rate calculated on the basis of 18 years, we have arbitrarily supposed that the trend of this growth was straight and uniform between 1955 and 1973. But in reality it has a historical tendency to curve with the deceleration of the growth rates.

In order to now show the convulsive course of the capitalist economy, we must leave aside the movement of long-term growth. We will not observe the index of industrial production itself but instead the percentage change of each monthly index in relationship to the index of the same month of the previous year. This will allow us to follow the vissitudes of production month by month. Table 1 (page 20) compiles the annual growth rates, calculated month by month, for the United States, Great Britain, Japan, Germany, France and Italy from January 1970 to the last figures available (16). These figures show the recovery which has followed the recession of 1970-71, they show the boom of 1972-73, then the downturn in the second half of 1973, and finally the general drop of industrial production in the second half of 1974 and in 1975.

The graphs of these growth rates have been superimposed in the graph page 19 (purposedly avoiding to identify each country). This graph is better than long commentaries in showing the extent to which the crisis is *international* and *simultaneous* — and those gentlemen who theorize the «specificity» of their own country and the «national ways» are invited to put on their spectacles.

(15) *The Economist*, June 12, 1975.

(16) The same calculations have been made on a quarterly basis instead of a monthly one from 1963 to 1974 in the previous report on «The Course of World Imperialism», *Programme Communiste* no. 64, pp. 40-41.



**THE CHANGE OF THE INDEX OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION
— SIX MAJOR COUNTRIES —**

The principal western capitalist countries are competitors on the world market at the same time that they are linked together through this market, since the greatest part of the commodities which they produce are exchanged among themselves; they *draw each other into the crisis* just as they drew each other in the phase of expansion which had preceded.

The nations which dominate the world market likewise draw along the smaller capitalist countries into the crisis, as is shown by the generalized fall of the

TABLE 1 - INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

*Percentage change, month on
corresponding month of previous year*

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
UNITED STATES												
1970	— 0.7	— 1.4	— 2.0	— 2.0	— 2.0	— 2.7	— 3.4	— 3.4	— 4.8	— 6.8	— 6.9	— 4.8
1971	— 2.1	— 2.1	— 2.1	— 1.4	— 0.7	— 0.7	— 0.7	— 2.1	0.7	2.9	2.9	2.9
1972	2.9	4.3	5.0	5.7	5.7	5.7	6.9	8.7	8.5	10.0	10.7	10.6
1973	9.8	9.7	9.6	9.4	10.3	11.3	11.2	10.1	9.1	8.1	7.2	6.2
1974	2.6	0.8	0	0.8	0.8	0	— 0.8	— 1.5	— 1.6	— 1.7	— 4.3	— 6.5
1975	— 9.3	— 10.8	— 11.9	— 12.4	— 13.1	— 12.6	— 11.7	— 9.7				
UNITED KINGDOM												
1970	0.8	2.4	4.1	2.4	— 0.8	0	0	1.6	2.4	3.2	0	1.6
1971	3.2	0	— 2.3	0	2.4	1.6	1.6	0	— 0.7	— 0.7	0.8	— 0.7
1972	— 2.3	— 8.8	2.4	2.3	3.9	2.3	4.7	4.7	5.5	6.3	7.1	7.9
1973	8.0	20.8	10.9	6.8	4.7	6.7	5.7	5.7	4.7	4.5	2.7	0
1974	— 7.4	— 6.3	— 4.4	0	0	— 0.9	0.9	1.8	0	— 2.0	— 2.7	— 2.1
1975	4.9	3.8	0	— 4.7	— 6.7	— 8.1	— 8.3					
JAPAN												
1970	18.7	18.8	21.4	18.0	17.0	20.0	17.7	16.9	14.7	11.4	9.7	10.3
1971	10.3	8.1	9.2	5.1	0.4	3.0	3.0	3.8	4.9	2.2	6.9	3.7
1972	5.2	6.4	6.2	7.4	13.7	8.4	7.6	8.3	7.8	10.5	11.2	14.9
1973	18.2	17.1	18.7	17.7	19.4	18.3	19.4	18.0	17.8	18.4	17.2	12.6
1974	9.8	9.0	3.1	2.4	2.3	— 1.5	— 1.1	— 5.3	— 6.1	— 9.7	— 13.4	— 13.8
1975	— 18.0	— 18.3	— 15.8	— 14.4	— 14.7	— 11.7	— 11.2					
GERMANY												
1970	8.6	9.3	10.0	8.5	11.1	4.8	7.6	4.0	3.4	3.3	1.3	0
1971	3.3	3.9	1.9	3.9	— 1.8	3.2	1.9	— 0.6	3.3	3.2	1.9	— 3.3
1972	2.5	— 1.2	1.2	1.2	3.1	0.6	1.2	3.2	2.5	3.8	6.4	15.6
1973	8.6	12.7	6.6	8.5	5.6	10.5	3.8	8.7	11.3	5.5	5.5	6.3
1974	1.8	0.8	0.8	0	0.8	3.5	2.5	— 2.1	— 2.7	— 4.4	— 3.5	— 8.9
1975	— 8.5	— 8.5	— 4.0	— 12.9	— 5.5	— 14.2						
FRANCE												
1970	7.9	7.9	9.4	7.0	4.2	4.9	2.7	2.7	6.3	3.4	6.3	5.5
1971	2.0	3.3	6.0	1.9	2.6	6.0	7.4	7.4	8.6	8.6	8.6	7.2
1972	8.4	6.4	5.0	7.7	11.1	7.6	8.1	8.1	5.5	5.5	6.7	8.6
1973	9.0	10.9	10.1	7.2	10.6	9.8	9.5	9.5	9.0	8.7	7.6	1.6
1974	2.5	2.5	0	3.3	0.8	2.5	4.0	4.0	0.8	0	— 3.2	— 4.2
1975	— 7.2	— 7.2	— 8.9	— 9.6	— 12.7	— 10.4						
ITALY												
1970	4.1	7.1	4.1	2.7	3.4	0	2.7	0	10.0	14.5	17.7	11.7
1971	0	— 1.3	— 2.6	— 4.6	— 2.6	— 2.7	— 5.9	— 6.2	— 2.0	— 0.6	— 1.9	— 0.6
1972	1.3	0.6	0.6	2.8	3.4	4.1	2.1	5.2	— 2.0	5.3	4.0	1.9
1973	3.9	5.0	6.1	15.4	14.0	18.0	23.7	20.0	18.3	12.4	12.5	11.4
1974	20.0	16.1	17.8	12.5	8.9	7.2	2.6	— 4.2	4.3	— 2.8	— 7.3	— 11.1
1975	— 12.5	— 7.3	— 14.3	— 9.8	— 18.7							

Sources : O.E.C.D., *Main Economic Indicators*, and official figures published in the press. These data have been calculated on the basis of the seasonally adjusted monthly indexes of industrial production.

production indexes of the latter. Thus between June 1974 and June 1975 industrial production dropped as follows :

Canada	— 6.1 %	Belgium (May)	— 14.6 %
Australia	— 11.8 %	Netherlands	— 8.1 %
Austria	— 11.7 %	Spain (May)	— 8.7 %

The statistical figures in Table 1 also show the depth and duration of the crisis which is without equal in the period since the second imperialist war : as of June 1975, industrial production (compared monthly with the year before) had dropped for 12 consecutive months in the United States, 13 months in Japan, 11 months in Germany, 9 months in Italy, and 8 months in France (the case of Great Britain is slightly different since the comparisons were distorted for the first three months of 1975 due to the miners strike and the three day week in the beginning of 1974 which resulted from it). In the last month for which figures are available, industrial production had dropped 11.7 % in the U.S., 8.1 % in Great Britain, 11.7 % in Japan, 14.2 % in Germany, 10.4 % in France and 18.7 % in Italy and there is nothing to indicate for sure that the deepest point of the crisis has been reached.

● The Movement of Prices

The alternating movement of expansion and crisis of capitalist production affects the prices, tending to give them also an alternating movement of increase and decrease :

«Crises are usually preceded by a general inflation in prices of all articles of capitalist production. All of them therefore participate in the subsequent crash and at their former prices they cause a glut in the market. The market can absorb a larger volume of commodities at falling prices, at prices which have fallen below their cost-prices, than it could absorb at their former prices. The excess of commodities is always relative; in other words it is an excess at particular prices. The prices at which the commodities are then absorbed are ruinous for the producer or merchant» (17).

The fact that the market is in a position to absorb the commodities once their prices have fallen, when it could not when their prices were higher (something which can be empirically verified in each crisis), clearly shows that we are not faced with crises of overproduction *in itself* but instead with crises of overproduction of *capital* in relationship to the valorization permitted by the capitalist and mercantile relations. Therefore, the only way out for capital taken as a whole is the fall of the prices of commodities which results in a loss for the sellers, ruin and bankruptcy for certain producers, and thus the depreciation in the value of global capital until the point is reached where it will be possible once again to rebegin its cycle of self-expansion.

But the cyclical movement of production is not the only factor to exercise an influence on the movement of prices. On one hand the price of each commodity is determined in the final analysis by its *value*, which historically tends to fall with the growth of the productivity of labor. But on the other hand with the development of capitalism, which implies first the concentration and centralization of capital, then the formation of monopolies and cartels, there appears a persistent tendency of the prices to rise : this tendency appears historically as the result

(17) Marx, *Theories of Surplus-Value*, Chapter XVII, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1968, part II, p. 505.

TABLE 2 - INDEX OF THE WORLD PRICE OF METALS

Month	Index	% change on the year
1974 - May	245.8	+ 102 %
July	158.7	+ 14 %
September	139.3	- 4 %
November	131.9	- 19 %
1975 - January	117.8	- 26 %
May	116.5	- 52 %
July	111.5	- 40 %
September	111.8	- 19 %

Source : The Economist, dollar index (1970 = 100), first week of each month.

of the generalization of monopolist practices of capital faced with the falling rate of profit, and it has the advantage for capital of tending to constantly rob the workers of a part of their wages.

The result of the combination of these trends, as the experience of the years 1973 and 1974 has amply shown, is a galloping inflation in the period of the productive *boom* and a *resistance* to the fall of prices in the period of crisis and depression. This « resistance » is only a general tendency: prices can fall in the sectors where monopolies and cartels are not very developed; and it is also true that since competition is inherent to capital, no cartel is guaranteed of holding out in an extremely profound crisis and the cartels can abruptly crash after having momentarily resisted the tide.

But because of this « resistance » the crisis does not manifest itself immediately through a general fall of prices but instead it is first manifested by the fall of the prices of certain commodities (i.e. those for which there is free play of competition) and by the slowing down or the cessation of the rise in the prices of other commodities. It is precisely this which can be verified by observing the prices of raw materials and the wholesale prices, both of which closely reflect the variations of production.

Prices of Raw Materials. We will utilize the index of the price of metals (in dollars) regularly published by *The Economist*. Table 2 shows the evolution of this index (with 1970 = 100) for the last 18 months. In May 1974 it was at its all-time high of 245.8: the price of the metals on which the index is based had increased by 102.5 % in one year, that is to say it had doubled. This was the boom. After the peak of May 1974 the fall was very rapid, and one year later, in May 1975, the index had diminished by 52 %: in other words the prices had lowered by one half, which means that they had fallen almost to the level of May 1973. This was the crisis. After May 1975 the fall in the prices continued although it slackened slightly: in September the index was at 111.8, down 19 % from the same month of the previous year and down 54 % in relationship to the peak of May 1974.

Wholesale Prices. Table 3 compiles the wholesale prices, country by country, for the last 9 months. For all the countries except Great Britain this verifies a slackening in the rise of prices and a stabilization beginning approximately in November 1974 with the index for the United States remaining near 156, that of

TABLE 3 - INDEX OF THE WHOLESALE PRICES
(1970 = 100)

	Sept. 74	Nov. 74	Jan. 75	March 75	May 75	July 75
UNITED STATES	151	156	156	154	157	159
% change on the year	18.9	23.8	17.3	12.4	12.1	8.8
UNITED KINGDOM ..	159	165	172	179	187	192
% change on the year	24.6	27.9	28.3	26.0	25.5	24.6
JAPAN	156	157	157	156	156	156
% change on the year	31.3	24.6	10.5	5.4	4.0	1.3
GERMANY	137	139	143	143	144	144
% change on the year	16.1	15.8	13.5	8.3	5.8	5.8
FRANCE	161	159	155	152	147	147
% change on the year	28.8	19.5	7.6	— 2.5	— 9.2	— 9.8
ITALY	187	190	190	191	190	191
% change on the year	43.8	39.7	25.8	13.0	9.7	5.5

Source : O.E.C.D., *Main Economic Indicators*.

Japan near 156-157, Germany near 143-144, and Italy near 190 ; the index for France (which is calculated in a different way) has decreased since July 1974. On the other hand, for the same countries, the annual increase is obviously slackening : in 7 months it diminished from 18.9 % to 12.1 % for the United States, from 31.3 % to 4 % for Japan, from 16.1 % to 5.8 % for Germany and from 43.8 % to 9.7 % for Italy ; for France there is no increase at all but a fall instead.

● World Trade

The present crisis is also manifested by a contraction of exchanges on the world market, which always reflects the cycles of production.

Growth of the Volume of World Exports

1968 : + 13 %
1969 : + 10 %
1970 : + 9 %
1971 : + 6.1 %

1972 : + 8.5 %
1973 : + 14.5 %
1974 : + 5 %

After a large increase of the volume of world exports in 1973 (+ 14.5 %) the deceleration became very acute in 1974 with an increase of only 5 %. For 1975, the GATT experts predict, for the first time since the end of the second imperialist war, a *decrease* in the total volume of exports.

This contraction of world commerce inevitably signifies an aggravation of the competition between the rival imperialisms, and a new outbreak of the commercial war, protectionism, monetary maneuvers, etc.

The Impoverishment of the Working Class

For the working class the cycles of production signify *permanent insecurity* under capitalism. The periodic crises mean layoffs and unemployment for some, an increase in the intensity of work for others, and a reduction of real wages and impoverishment for all.

● Unemployment

With the decline of production, capital abruptly rids itself of the part of the labor force which has become superfluous. It also reorganizes its productive machinery in order to increase the productivity and intensity of the labor of the workers who have not been laid off: it can thus reduce the expenses of variable capital still more and increase the rate of surplus value. The swelling of the reserve army of labor allows capital to exert a pressure on wages and to increase still more the intensity of exploitation.

In spite of the cynical falsifications of the bourgeoisie, the official statistics cannot hide the dramatic increase in unemployment, as is shown by Table 4. In one year, from June 1974 to June 1975, the official number of unemployed has increased by 65 % in the United States, 60 % in the United Kingdom, 48 % in Japan, 122 % in Germany and 94 % in France.

Starting from the hypothesis that the distortion caused by the falsifications is constant, we can assume that the official bourgeois statistics give reliable indications of the trend of unemployment. However the absolute figures give us only a pale image of the real situation. They do not take into account the immigrants who have been sent « home » through various means, from the legal restrictions at the borders, to legal or semi-legal terrorism (such as the murders of Algerians in France); neither do they take into account the workers who have not registered because they knew it was of no use, nor the latent unemployment, nor the partial unemployment which ranges from forced vacations to the reduction of the hours of work. A real estimate of the size of the industrial reserve army would require an exhaustive study. Therefore we will simply try to make an estimate of the real number of unemployed on the basis of bourgeois data.

In the United States, the official number of unemployed in May 1975 was 8,538,000 (seasonally adjusted), or more than 9 % of the labor force. But government officials admit that approximately 1,500,000 unemployed do not enter into the statistics because they have been discouraged from looking for work due to the crisis. According to Senator Humphrey the real unemployment figure in February was 10,800,000 (18) as compared to the official government figure of 7,500,000. In applying the same « conversion factor » to the statistics in the month of May, we arrive at a minimum estimate of 12,000,000 unemployed. It is necessary to add to this number the partially unemployed workers, hundreds of thousands of « illegal » immigrants who are deported because the police suddenly become more diligent when the economy no longer needs their cheap labor force, and also the unemployed black population a good part of which is not taken into account in the official statistics.

United Kingdom. The O.E.C.D. figures greatly underestimate the real situation, since they do not take into account either the young people arriving on the labor market after having finished school, or those who are employed part-time. Total unemployment in the U.K. had already reached the figure of 1.25 million people in August.

(18) *International Herald Tribune*, March 8, 1975.

TABLE 4 - OFFICIAL UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

	Sept. 74	Apr. 75	May 75	June 75	July 75	Aug. 75
UNITED STATES	5,303,000	8,176,000	8,538,000	7,896,000	7,838,000	7,794,000
% change on the year	+ 25	+ 80	+ 82	+ 65	+ 60	+ 58
UNITED KINGDOM ..	613,000	823,000	834,000	862,000	928,000	985,000
% change on the year	+ 13	+ 36	+ 50	+ 60	+ 66	+ 63
JAPAN	690,000	980,000	910,000	920,000	870,000	
% change on the year	+ 9	+ 42	+ 44	+ 48	+ 45	
GERMANY	557,000	1,087,000	1,017,000	1,002,000	1,035,000	1,031,000
% change on the year	+154	+ 92	+122	+122	+110	+ 93
FRANCE	535,000	757,000	737,000	738,000	765,000	797,000
% change on the year	+ 27	+ 82	+ 89	+ 94	+ 92	+ 86

Source : O.E.C.D., *Main Economic Indicators*, and official figures published in the press. Not seasonally adjusted, except for the U.S.

France. The official figures (737,000 unemployed in May, 765,000 in July) are also well below the actual number. An estimation according to the criteria used by the International Labor Office revealed nearly 1 million unemployed in March 1975, not taking into account 265,000 part-time workers (19). Another study by the Bank of England tried to unify estimates by adjusting for differences in the methods of calculation used by the various countries ; according to this study there were 1,150,000 unemployed in France in April (20). All these figures do not take into account the deportation of immigrants.

Germany. The official figures (1,017,000 unemployed in May, 1,035,000 in July) do not take into account either the massive deportation of immigrants, whose number diminished by 300,000 from March 1974 to March 1975, or the partial unemployment which was nearly 1 million people in April.

Japan. The bourgeois experts themselves acknowledge that the Japanese unemployment statistics are hardly representative because they do not take into account the seasonal workers who have been laid-off, the part-time employment, the workers who have been pressured into « voluntarily » quitting, or the forced « holidays » which mask temporary plant close-downs. The Mitsubishi Bank recently acknowledged that « the labour market is in an extremely serious state [...] the rise in unemployment rate in Japan constitutes an extremely serious situation » (21). Taking into account the above factors, a labour force which numbers over 50 million people, and the severity of the industrial slump, the official figure would have to at least be tripled to reach a minimum estimate of unemployment.

A quick estimate of the *minimum* number of unemployed in the six major western countries at the end of the first quarter of 1975 therefore gives the following result :

(19) *L'Expansion*, May 1975.

(20) *Financial Times*, June 20, 1975.

(21) *Mitsubishi Bank Review*, April 1975.

USA	12,000,000
Japan	2,700,000
France	1,200,000
U.K.	1,100,000
Germany	1,500,000
Italy	1,500,000
Total 6 countries	20,000,000

With at least 1,300,000 unemployed in the other developed countries of western Europe, and 1,400,000 in Canada and Australia, the estimate for the principal western capitalist countries is at least 22-23,000,000 unemployed towards the end of the first quarter of 1975. This figure is due to significantly increase until the end of the year and even afterwards.

● The Worsening Living Conditions of the Working Class

Under the banner of the so-called « struggle against inflation », most bourgeois states have undertaken an action in order to reduce real wages and thus increase the rate of surplus-value and the rate of profit which is diminishing. The crisis accentuates this tendency, since the capitalists who attempt to achieve « a forcible reduction of wages beneath the value of labour-power » (Marx) are helped in this by the pressure which is exerted on wages by the existence of the reserve army of labor.

In the United States, the offensive of capital against wages has begun well before the crisis proper. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce Statistics (22), the average hourly earnings per worker was \$ 4.44 in May 1975. However expressed in 1967 dollars (that is taking inflation into account) it has constantly diminished since September 1973, falling from an index of 109.9 (1967 = 100) to 106.3 in April 1975, or a reduction of 3.3 %.

Another indicator is still more explicit because it takes into account the reductions of the workweek: this is the « spendable earnings of a worker with 3 dependents ». Expressed in 1967 dollars, it was at \$ 97.50 per week in October 1972. It has constantly diminished since then; in April 1975 it was at \$ 87.46 per week, or a reduction of 10.3 % in 2 1/2 years. And it must be remembered that these figures, as well as those which will follow, officially express the real wages of the workers *who have a job*. This means that with the dramatic increase of unemployment, there is a much more severe reduction in the average incomes of the whole working class.

In France, according to the official statistics of the Ministry of Labor (23), the buying power of the worker's wages had begun to fall at the end of 1974 and the beginning of 1975. Between October 1974 and April 1975 the official index of hourly wages in the manufacturing industries had risen from 176.7 to 190.4, or an increase of 7.7 %. When corrected with respect to the rate of inflation, the hourly wages had officially increased by 1.8 % for the same period. But with the workweek shortened from 43.7 hours to 42.7 hours, or a decrease of 2.3 %, the real buying power has diminished and especially so since the shortening of the workweek affected overtime hours for which the workers receive a proportionally higher wage.

In Japan, the state and the employers had decided beforehand to offer a maximum wage increase of 15 % in the yearly wage negotiations in the Spring of 1975. While the real rise in the cost of living, according to the unions, had reached 18.9 % in one year from March 1974 to March 1975 (24) as opposed to

(22) *Survey of Current Business*, section *Labor Force, Employment and Earnings*.

(23) *Le Monde*, June 4, 1975.

(24) *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 25, 1975.

the official figure of 13.9 %, the workers have been granted an average annual wage increase of only 13.2 %. In the textile industry, the unions have even accepted a total wage freeze in exchange for the « promise » that they would not be layed off. Commenting on the results, the Mitsubishi Bank recognized that the unions have made « big concessions on wage demands because of the worsening economy » and that « the level of wage increases is in line with the views of management » (25).

In England, in spite of the indignant protests of the bourgeoisie who blames the « exaggerate » rise in wages on all the diseases of old British capitalism, the buying power of the hourly wage, calculated according to the official figures of the O.E.C.D., had begun to diminish in August 1974. The fluctuations of this decline reflected the combativity of a working class little disposed to « voluntarily » consent to the sacrifices required of it by the united front of capital, its state, the Labour government and the T.U.C. Judging the decrease in wages to be too slow for the needs of survival of British capitalism, the Labour government with the agreement of the T.U.C. has centrally imposed a ceiling of £ 6 per annum on the weekly wage increases, while the consumer prices rise at a rate of about 25 % per year.

Even with the figures available *at the beginning* of the crisis, we can see already that in all the western capitalist countries the famous bourgeois « prosperity » has only led to a growth of unemployment and a worsening of the living conditions, in short to an impoverishment of the working class. These trends will inevitably continue to intensify from now to the end of 1975 and in 1976.

The Crisis and the « Socialist » Countries

Can the Russian economy, those of the countries of Eastern Europe which are in the zone of influence of Russian imperialism, and that of China be spared by the crisis which hits the western capitalist economies so deeply?

In order to answer this question, we must refer back to what our party wrote in 1956 to explain why the great crisis of 1929 spared the Russian economy :

« In 1929 there was no channel of communication to link the rising Soviet capitalism and the international market. This would only be re-established, in a appreciable way, ten years later with the war of 1939. »

« This explains the fact that the crisis did not spread to Russia which was in a serious period of underproduction (production was a twentieth of what it is today and a tenth, or even less, of the per capita production of the other capitalist countries at that time). Therefore a crisis of overproduction could not appear in the interior of Russia, nor could it enter Russia from the exterior. The tragedy took place entirely outside of its frontiers. »

The fact that the crisis of 1929 had spared Russia was not at all due to the pretended « socialist » nature of its economy. But as we wrote « once the 'iron curtain' is transformed into a sheer veil through competition, the universal mercantile crisis will strike the heart of the young Russian industry » (26).

The entire explanation of the present situation can be found in these lines.

As Marx has showed, the cycles of periods of expansion and crisis emerge and begin their course in the most developed countries once a certain degree

(25) *Mitsubishi Bank Review*, June 1975.

(26) « La Russia nella grande rivoluzione e nella società contemporanea » [« Russia in the Great Revolution and in the Contemporary Society »], *Il programma comunista* n° 13, 1956.

TABLE 5 - EXPORTS AMONG THE MAJOR CAPITALIST COUNTRIES

	Percentage of exports from :						
	U.S.A.	U.K.	Japan	Germ.	France	Italy	Russia (1973)
Going towards:							
USA		10.7	23.3	7.5	4.8	7.6	0.9
U.K.	4.6		2.7	4.8	6.5	5.1	3.4
Japan	10.8	1.9		1.4	1.0	1.0	3.9
Germany	5.0	6.1	2.7		17.2	18.4	2.9
France	3.0	5.5	1.3	11.8		12.5	1.7
Italy	2.8	3.0	0.7	8.1	11.6		1.9
— the 6 above + Benelux	32.6	38.3	33.6	52.9	57.8	52.9	17.7
— the “socialist” countries	2.2	3.1	7.0	8.4	4.0	5.8	57.7

Sources : O.E.C.D., *Statistics of Foreign Trade*; *Vnechnaia Torgovlia S.S.S.R.*, Moscow, 1974. 1974 figures, except for Russia.

of capitalist development is attained. These cycles are transmitted and unified by the medium of the world market throughout the countries which are deeply integrated in it.

But Russian capitalism, even if it is much more developed than it was in 1929, nevertheless is still relatively backward in relationship to western capital. Its development is handicapped by the backwardness of its agrarian structure and the low productivity of its agriculture. Above all it is still compelled to buy most of its technologically advanced equipment from the West since it is incapable of producing it itself, and it must finance these purchases through borrowing capital. The fact that Russia lags behind the other major capitalist countries does not signify that the Russian economy does not know crises : the anarchy of production reigns there just as in the West and it suffices to read the Russian press to know that mountains of the most diverse commodities regularly rot away here and there because they have been produced without foreseeing the needs of the market. But these are still crises which strike branches and sectors of production according to the caprices of capitalist anarchy. They are not general crises which strike all the important sectors of production, generalizing themselves throughout the whole of the economy. The overproduction of capital and commodities remains localized and episodic ; it is not yet general. A general crisis of over-production cannot yet — in 1975 — develop and burst from inside Russia.

Could the crisis, as a second hypothesis, be transmitted from the exterior through the intermediary of exchanges on the world market? In order to answer this question it is necessary to refer to the statistics. For the western countries East-West trade made new progress in 1974. But as is shown in table 5, the volume of their exports towards the East in relationship to the whole of their exports still remains low: 2.2 % of American exports, 3.1 % of British exports, 4 % of French, and 5.8 % of Italian. Only Japan and Germany allot a more considerable portion of their exports to these countries. As these figures show, the development of East-West trade has been insufficient to prevent the crisis in the West.

The greatest part of the commerce of the developed western capitalist countries, as is shown in the preceding row of figures in the same table, is still carried out among themselves. The same is also true for the eastern (or so-called « socialist ») countries as is shown by an examination of the last column of table 5: in 1973 Russia still directed less than 1 % of its total exports towards its American partner; it directed only a little less than a sixth of its total exports (a proportion which will have increased in 1974 but without going beyond one fifth) towards the six developed capitalist countries which are the center and the motor of world capitalism, while it directed more than a half towards the other so-called « socialist » countries.

Russia continues to immerse itself more and more into the world market but the « iron curtain » has not yet become the « sheer veil » which we spoke of in 1956, even if it is well on the road to becoming that. Russia's degree of integration in the world market is not yet such that the crises of the West are directly transmitted to its economy. This is why Russian capitalism does not experience the deep crisis which hits western capitalism.

This does not signify that the crisis will spare it entirely. Even the crisis of 1929 was not without an influence for due to the slump in the world market, Russian exports fell with a corresponding drop in imports (essentially machine tools and equipment) since exports served to pay for imports. This effect is shown in the figures of table 6 (below).

The same mechanism must also intervene in the crisis of 1975 (although the soaring prices of oil, of which Russia is an exporter might compensate in part for what is lost on other exports) thus probably delaying somewhat the purchase of the equipment which Russia so greatly wished to acquire. The crisis of western capitalism does not serve the interests of Moscow.

On the whole the same thing holds for China whose degree of integration in the world market is still relatively very weak but 80 % of whose exports

TABLE 6 - RUSSIA'S EXPORTS AND IMPORTS
(in millions of rubles)

Year	Exports	Imports
1929	724	691
1930	813	830
1931	636	867
1932	451	552
1933	389	273
1934	328	182

Source : *Statisticheskii Sbornik*, Moscow, 1970.

(which serve to finance the purchase of equipment) go towards the western capitalist countries.

On the other hand certain Eastern European countries such as Hungary and above all Poland are already quite integrated in the world market and carry out a large proportion of their foreign trade with the great western countries. The contraction of world trade will have an inevitable repercussion on their industrial production just as inflation has already had a repercussion on their prices.

But if Russian capitalism has escaped the crisis of 1975, it only remains a question of time. The massive purchase of equipment and the borrowing of capital from the West contribute to the development of Russian capitalism. Its integration in the world market continually progresses as is shown by the figures below:

*Proportion of Russian foreign trade (imports + exports)
with the developed western capitalist countries*

1950 : 15 %	1972 : 22.6 %
1960 : 19 %	1973 : 26.6 %
1971 : 21.5 %	1974 : 31 % (est.)

Sources : *Statisticheskii Sbornik*, Moscow, 1970 ; *Vnechnaia Torgovlia S.S.R.*, 1972 and 1973 ; *Financial Times*, April 25, 1975 (for the 1974 estimate).

Some commodities produced in Russia thanks to western equipment and capital have already made their appearance on the world market, thus contributing to the aggravation of the crisis. Thus this irony of history (but an irony that we had already foreseen from the beginning) : Agnelli, the chairman of Fiat, recently asked for a more rigorous legislation of the E.E.C. against the import of the *Polski 125P* and the *Lada* (the Polish and Russian «Fiat») which were sold, according to Agnelli, at «unfairly» low prices in Europe (27). And this is only the beginning. When the point is reached where all the main branches of Russian industry are directly interconnected with the world market, they will contribute to the glutting of the markets and to the crises ; and reciprocally the crises of the world market will be directly transmitted to the Russian market and economy.

The Catastrophic Course of World Capitalism

What is the short term future of capitalism ? The duration and the severity of a crisis are not dependent only on the cyclical movement of capital, but also on whether or not there is an eruption of the whole series of contradictions and explosives situations that have been accumulated by the capitalist system in various domains : the international monetary system which the bourgeois economists periodically announce is in danger of collapsing ; the huge pyramids of credit which have been accumulated on the basis of the growing debt of the enterprises in all countries and which could crash one after the other when bankruptcies begin to occur ; the settlement of enormous speculative operations on the monetary markets ; the Stock Market speculations which can unleash movements of panic, etc. The barriers which the capitalist states have erected

(27) *Financial Times*, April 23, 1975.

against the danger of a general monetary and financial crash have been able to resist up to now (as has been shown for example by the settlement of several bank failures in the summer of 1974 in Germany and the United States). The only Marxist certainty that we can have is that these barriers will not be able to indefinitely resist the growing pressure of the contradictions of the whole of the capitalist system. If the present crisis strains these barriers to the point of breaking then world capitalism will without doubt undergo a long and severe depression that will be worse and deeper than that of 1929. But even if they resist, and the crisis is followed by an economic recovery, the situation would be such that the most aware of the bourgeoisie, far from rejoicing, would fear the consequences.

Let us examine this hypothesis. The world cycle such as we have observed from 1971 to 1975, has an average duration of about four to five years. All things being equal, this would indicate that there would be an economic recovery, at first country by country then generalized, beginning around the end of 1975 and the beginning of 1976. This is the forecast that has been made by most of the bourgeois experts and it is substantiated by some economic indicators.

In this hypothesis, the recovery, slow at the beginning, would accelerate around 1977 through the play of the synchronized cycle and through the fact that various national economies would draw each other in; the deeper the crisis has been, the stronger the recovery should be, resulting around 1978 in a new productive boom. Does the bourgeoisie sing about victory because of this prospect? Far from it. Here is what *The Economist* writes:

« This 1977 boom [as forecast by The Economist] may reproduce all the worst features of the previous one — a bigger commodity price explosion and so the return of domestic wage-push inflation [...]. The 1977 boom is very likely, in its turn, to breed another big slump. The international economy looks like becoming dangerously unstable. If the cycle is to be stopped, now is the time for governments to put their heads together to see what can be done about producing a controlled boom. It will be no good waiting until the damage has been done and then trying frantically to pick up the pieces » (28).

This jumble of uneasiness within the most lucid fringes of the bourgeoisie as they are faced with the uncontrollable convulsions of their own mode of production, and of petty bourgeois stupidity in regards to means of remedying this situation (for instance an international economic conference among the imperialist robbers) only reveals the impotence of the ruling classes. When the crisis is here, everything goes wrong — but when bourgeois « prosperity » returns, all will go wrong just the same! In effect capitalism can recover from one crisis only to prepare for other still more gigantic crises. If these is a recovery, it can only amplify the worst features of the 1973 boom: the return of galloping inflation, a new rise in the prices of raw materials because of the simultaneous demand of all the consuming countries, frenzied speculation in all sectors, etc., which all will lead, most likely in 1979-1980, to a new crisis — a crisis which will be so much more deep and severe since it will have been simultaneous in all major countries and since the capitalist contradictions will have increased still more.

At the same time, the inter-imperialist rivalry will have sharpened, the economic weight of the German and Japanese capitalisms on the world market will have increased still more, the forward race of capital will be still more rapid. The necessity on one hand of showing always more competitiveness on the world market and on the other the spur of the fall in the rate of profit compels the bourgeoisie all over the world to systematically « rationalize » its productive

(28) *The Economist*, April 12, 1975.

machinery, that is to say to replace workers by machines on a great scale. This is why *even in the hypothesis of an economic recovery* the bourgeois experts foresee a worldwide prolongation or growth of unemployment.

United States. The message of Ford to the Congress in February 1975 predicted the following, with the perspective of an economic recovery in the second half of the year :

— 7.9 % of the labor force, or about 7,200,000 workers would be unemployed in 1975 ;

— 7.5 % of the labor force, or about 6,800,000 workers would be unemployed in 1977.

These forecasts are certainly an underestimation since the American administration predicted a maximum of 7,400,000 unemployed for 1975, while the number had already reached 8,500,000 by May 1975.

In a recent study, *Fortune* magazine predicted that following the end of the crisis, the United States would be left with « a long and painful period of high unemployment ». The author, who based his study on the analyses of the official specialists and advisors to the White House, wrote :

« However vigorous the coming economic recovery proves to be, the U.S. will be afflicted with unpleasantly high rates of unemployment for the rest of the 1970's. On this grim prospect, economists of almost every stripe agree. [...] ...it would take six years of 6 percent growth to reduce unemployment by four points — from, say, 9.5 to 5.5. And by the standards of the past, six years of 6 percent growth would be an extraordinary economic performance. [...] With output per man-hour down nearly 10 percent from its long-term trend, there is ample room to expand output without doing much rehiring. [...] Large gains in productivity in the early phase of a recovery come about mainly because expansion of output is not matched by expansion of white-collar staffs [...] But other influences also help. At the bottom of a recession, supervisors have maximum scope to rearrange schedules, shop stewards are most cooperative about work rules, and the morale of workers lucky enough to have jobs is relatively high. [...] »

« What can public policy do about the long-term unemployment problem? It would help somewhat if Congress would stop raising the minimum wage, which discourages employers from hiring marginal and inexperienced workers. [...] The most valuable thing government can do to help ease the unemployment problem in the years ahead is to encourage vigorous expansion of the private economy » (29).

This only confirms with the most tranquil cynicism that the crisis signifies that American capital is preparing itself to « rationalize » production on a great scale, that is to say to reorganize labor by speeding the rythm of work, by increasing the intensity of work for those workers who are fortunate enough to keep their jobs, and consequently with the result that millions of workers will be thrown in the street for a long period. As for the proposed « remedies », the first, the reduction of real wages with the lowest paid job categories being hardest hit, cynically expresses the projects that capital has in mind. The second either could not be achieved (as the author himself recognizes at the beginning of his article), or else its achievement would lead in a still more rapid way to the glutting of the markets and the next crisis ; in any case it does not depend on the « will » of the agents of capital.

England. The last official estimate already predicted 1.5 million unemployed in 1976 because of the crisis. In his Budget speech to the Commons last April,

(29) « The Slow Road Back to Full Employment », *Fortune*, June 1975.

Healey declared that it was necessary to « preserve and improve the international competitiveness » of British industry which is threatened by bankruptcy. In all the important branches, the rationalisation of production has been started in order to attempt to rejuvenate the decrepit British capitalism so that it can sustain a more and more bitter competition on the world market. The essential theme is the « overmanning » of the enterprises, that is to say the necessity of massive lay-offs in order to increase the intensity and the productivity of labor. Several projects have already been announced :

— in the steel industry, the *British Steel Corporation* plans to reduce its labor force by about 20,000 because of the slump in steel demand « and has no intention of reemploying many of the displaced workers when the market revives » (30). The corporation plans to invest £ 4.5 billion from now to 1980, and to reduce the total labor force from the present 220,000 to 180,000. According to the corporation's chairman, Japanese steelmills achieve production rates of 750 tonnes per man each year, compared with a BSC level of 150 tonnes per man : so « the real figure should be 50,000 people producing the 37 million tonnes of steel a year we need by then ».

— in the auto industry, *British Leyland* is to be completely reorganised. According to top management, the company is suffering from « serious overmanning », and « the need to reduce manning levels is absolutely paramount » (31). In 1973 British Leyland produced 5.9 cars per man employed, compared with 11.6 for Volkswagen and 14.6 for Renault. Out of a total labor force of 204,000, about 50,000 jobs will have to go if the group is to achieve continental levels of production efficiency (32).

— in the railways, according to a Department of Employment study, total numbers employed are expected to drop from 22,000 in 1973 to 180,000 by 1981 (33).

— in the mining industry, the same study forecasts that there will be only 270,000 employees in 1981, compared with 360,000 in 1973.

— in the chemical industry, *Imperial Chemical Industries*, which has already cut its labor force by 8,000 in the last 5 years, « must shed still more staff to improve its productivity and bring it in line with its world competitors » (34). The company's sales and profit per employee were \$ 34,532 and \$ 3,060 in 1974, as compared to \$ 92,655 and \$ 10,458 for the U.S. group *Dow Chemical*.

We could add many more examples : in its attempt to rejuvenate itself, to maintain its markets and to reestablish its profits, British capital under its Labour government does not know (and cannot know) any other solution than to increase lay-offs to the point of making them become an institution.

France. According to studies that have been carried out on the basis of the official predictions of the level of employment for the 7th economic Plan, in 1980 there would be — in a perspective not of a crisis but of a 3 % to 4 % annual growth of the gross domestic product — an unemployment of 700,000 to 900,000 workers (35). A study carried out by the journal *L'Expansion* which based itself on the official hypothesis of the 7th economic Plan predicted between 700,000 and 1,400,000 unemployed in 1980. The author writes :

« The rise of labor costs since 1968 has accentuated the tendency to substitute capital for labor [...] Since 1968, labor productivity has increased almost as rapidly as production itself : thus the increased production per worker accounts for almost all of the supplementary production achieved. »

« The oil crisis [in fact the capitalist crisis — Ed.] has given a new surge to rationalisation. The sharpening of competition, the pressure of costs, the

(30) *Financial Times*, April 24, 1975.

(31) *Financial Times*, May 8, 1975.

(32) *Financial Times*, June 10, 1975.

(33) *Financial Times*, May 30, 1975.

(34) *Financial Times*, May 28, 1975.

(35) *Le Monde*, June 26, 1975.

trimming of the profit margins may, even more than ever, push the firms to make productivity-oriented investments [...]

« In the big corporations, up to 10 % of the labor force is said to be superfluous [...] We should get used to living with as high a level of unemployment in 1980 as we have now. And to prevent it from being higher, experts advocate the highest possible growth rate for the 7th plan » (36).

This trend towards « rationalization » through massive lay-offs is not limited to the older capitalisms. Thus in Germany the « savings program » of Volkswagen plans for the lay-off of 25,000 workers by the end of 1976, that of the railways plans the elimination of 60,000 jobs out of a labor force of about 400,000 (37). In Japan a recently published Government White Book predicted « possible mass joblessness in the coming 10 years » and emphasized « the need for high economic growth to solve the problem » (38).

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Capital knows neither frontiers nor « national exceptions » ; the evils which it engenders and the « solutions » which the various bourgeoisies attempt to use are the same throughout the world. Through the spur of competition, the general laws of capitalist production impose themselves on each individual capital, pushing it to accumulate without mercy, to unceasingly increase productivity, to replace workers by machines and to diminish real wages whenever possible. In the name of the sacro-saint « competitiveness » each national capitalist trust « rationalizes » on a great scale and lays off hundreds of thousands of workers, all the while invoking with its incantations a hypothetical « high economic growth » which could only be materialized in the form of a brief blaze leading to a new crisis that would be so much more violent than the growth had been rapid.

At the close of thirty years of bourgeois « prosperity » which was pretended to bring well-being for the workers, here is the beautiful alternative which is offered to them : on one hand, if the crisis is prolonged, general unemployment and poverty because capitalist production is paralyzed for want of markets ; on the other hand, if an economic recovery follows the crisis, general unemployment because in order to have access to markets, the rival capitalists must lower their costs by ridding themselves of a part of the labor force. On one hand, a systematic and generalized fall in the living conditions ; on the other, a resurgence of galloping inflation, simultaneous with the existence of a large reserve army of labor, both tending to lower real wages. On one hand, a gradual deepening and extension of the crisis ; on the other, the preparation for a new crisis which will be still more deep and vast than the previous one.

In one case as in the other, the working class has for a future only the aggravation of exploitation, the deterioration of its conditions of existence, the annihilation of the advantages that capital pretended to « guarantee » it and the increasing pressure of a mode of production which can only escape its contradictions by aggravating them and by pressing down, always more heavily, on the backs of the exploited.

But by thus accumulating social dynamite, capitalism undermines its own foundations. By making itself more and more intolerable for the mass of the exploited, it can only draw the hour of the explosions nearer which tomorrow will inevitably begin to shake the ignoble established order of bourgeois society — once again signaling the first steps of the proletariat on the long way towards its revolutionary emancipation.

(36) « Une nouvelle pénurie : l'emploi », *L'Expansion*, May 1975.

(37) *Financial Times*, June 11, 1975.

(38) *Mainichi Daily News*, July 15, 1975.

Force, Violence and Dictatorship in the Class Struggle

I. Actual and Potential Violence

In the history of social aggregates we recognize the use of material force and violence in an overt form whenever we observe conflicts and clashes among individuals and among groups which result, through many different forms, in the material injury and destruction of physical individuals.

Whenever this aspect comes to the surface in the course of social history, it is received by the most varied reactions of abomination or of exaltation which in turn furnish the most banal foundations of the various successive mystical doctrines that fill and encumber the thought of the collectivities.

Even the most opposing conceptions are in agreement that violence among humans is not only an essential element of social energetics but also an integral factor, if not always a decisive one, of all the transformations of historical forms.

In order to avoid falling into rhetorics and metaphysics — such as those numerous confessions and philosophies which oscillate between either the apriorisms of the worship of force, of the « superman » or of the superior people, or else the apriorisms of resignation, non-resistance and pacifism — it is necessary to go back to the basis of that material relationship, physical violence. It is necessary to recognize its fundamental role in all forms of social organization even when it acts only in its latent state, that is through pressure, threat and armed preparation which produce the most widespread historical effects even before there has been bloodshed, after it, or without it.

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The beginning of the modern age, which is socially characterized by the gigantic development of productive techniques and the capitalist economy, was accompanied by a fundamental conquest of scientific knowledge of the physical universe that is bound to the names of Galileo and Newton.

It became clear that two fields of phenomena which Aristotelian and scholastic physics had held as absolutely separate and even metaphysically opposite — the field of terrestrial mechanics and the field of celestial mechanics — were in reality one and the same and had to be investigated and represented with the same theoretical scheme.

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In other words it was understood for the first time that the force which a body exerts on the ground on which it rests, or on our hand which supports it, not only is the same force which puts the body in motion when it is left free to fall but it is also the same force which governs the movements of the planets in space, their revolutions in apparently immutable orbits, and their possible collisions with each other.

It was not a question of a merely qualitative and philosophical identity but of a scientific and practical one, since the same kind of measurement could establish the dimensions of the fly-wheel of a machine and determine, for instance, the weight and the velocity of the moon.

The great conquests of knowledge — as could be shown by a study of gnoseology conducted with the Marxist method — do not consist in establishing new eternal and irrevocable truths by means of revealing discoveries, since the road always remains open to further developments and to richer scientific and mathematical representations of the phenomena of a given field. Instead, they consist essentially in definitively breaking down the premises of ancient errors, including the blinding force of tradition which prevented our knowledge from reaching a representation of the real relationships of things.

In fact, even in the field of mechanics science has and will make discoveries which go beyond the limits of Galileo's and Newton's laws and formulas. But the historical fact remains that they demolished the obstacle of the Aristotelian conception according to which an ideal sphere, concentric to the earth, separated two incompatible worlds — the earthly world of ours, that of corruption and wretched mortal life, and the celestial world of incorruptibility and of the icy, splendid immutability. This conception was profitably utilized by the ethical and mystical constructions of Christianity and was perfectly adaptable as a social parallel of the relationships in a human world based on the privileges of aristocracies.

The identification of the field of mechanical facts revealed by our immediate experience with the field of cosmic facts allowed for it to be simultaneously established that the energy a body possesses is identical in substance whether its movement with respect to us and its immediate surroundings is empirically evident or whether this body itself is apparently at rest.

The two concepts of potential energy (energy with respect to position or positional energy) and of kinetic energy (the energy of motion) when applied to material bodies will be and have already been subjected to more and more complex interpretations. These interpretations will lead to the point where the quantities of matter and energy which appeared invariable in the formulations of the classical physics texts (and which are *still adequate* to calculate and construct structures on the human scale that utilize non-atomic forms of energy) will prove to be transmutable through an incessant exchange whose radius of action extends to the entire cosmos.

However, it still remains that the recognition of the identity in their action between the potential reserves and the kinetic manifestations of energy was a historically decisive step in the formation of scientific knowledge.

This scientific concept has become familiar to everyone living in the

modern world. Water contained in an elevated tank is still and appears motionless and lifeless. Let us open the valves of the pipeline with a turbine situated below and the turbine will be set in motion yielding us motive power. The amount of available power was already known before we opened the valve since it depends on the mass of the water and on its height: that is to say it is positional energy.

When the water flows and moves, the same energy manifests itself as motion, i.e. as kinetic energy.

By the same token, any child of today knows that if we do not touch the two still, cold wires of an electric circuit, no exchange will take place between them; but if we introduce a conductor, sparks, heat and light are emitted with violent effects on muscles and nerves if the conductor is our body.

The two harmless wires had a certain potential, but woe to whomever transforms this energy into a kinetic state. Today all this is known even by the illiterate but it would have greatly baffled the seven sages of ancient Greece and the doctors of the church.

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Let us now pass from the field of mechanics to that of organic life. Among the much more complex manifestations and transformations of biophysics and biochemistry which govern the birth, nourishment, growth, motion and reproduction of animals, we find the use of muscular power in the struggle against the physical environment as well as against other living beings of the same or of different species.

In these material contacts and in these brutal clashes the parts and the tissues of the animals are hurt and lacerated and in the cases of the most serious injuries, the animal dies.

The intervention of the factor of violence is commonly recognized only when an injury to an organism results from the use of muscular power by one animal against another. We do not see violence, in common language, when a landslide or a hurricane kills animals but only when the classic wolf devours the lamb or comes to blows with another wolf which claims a share of it.

Gradually the common interpretation of these facts slips down into the deceitful field of ethical and mystical constructions. One hates the wolf but one weeps for the lamb. Later on man will legitimize without question the killing of the same lamb for his meal but will scream with horror against cannibals; murderers will be condemned but warriors will be exalted. All these cases of the cutting and tearing of living flesh can be found in an infinite gamut of tones which furnish the prolific soil for endless literary variations. Among them we also could include — to give an ethical problem to those who would judge our actions — the incision of the surgical knife on the cancerous tumor.

The early human representations, with the inadequacy which characterized them, investigated the phenomena of mechanical nature and, due to an infantile anthropomorphism, applied moral criteria to these phenomena.

Earth returned to the earth, water returned to the sea and air and fire rose because each element sought its own element, its natural position, and

shunned its opposites, since love and hatred were the moving forces of things.

If water or mercury did not drop down in the overturned vessel it was because nature abhorred a vacuum. After Torricelli had carried out a barometric vacuum, it became possible to measure the weight of the air, which also is a heavy body and tends downwards with such violence that it would crush us to the ground if we were not surrounded and penetrated all over by it. Air therefore does love its opposites after all and should be condemned for an adulterous violation of its duties.

In every field, to one extent or another, voluntarism and ethicism lead man to believe in the same stupidities.

Going back to the violent struggle of the animal against adversities or to the struggle for the satisfaction of his needs through the use of his muscular strength (and leaving aside the bourgeois Darwinian discourse on the struggle for survival, natural selection and similar refrains) we shall point out that here too the same motives and effects of the use of force can present themselves as potential or *virtual* on one side, and as kinetic or *actual* on the other.

The animal who has experienced the dangers of fire, ice and flood will learn that instead of confronting them it is best to flee as soon as he perceives the danger signs. In the same way violence between two living beings can exercise its effects in many cases without being physically manifested.

The wild dog will never contend with the lion for the killed roe-buck since he knows that he would follow the same destiny as the victim. Many times the prey succumbs from terror before being actually seized by the carnivore; sometimes a glance is enough to immobilize it and deprive it not only of the possibility of struggle but also of flight itself.

In all these cases the supremacy of force has a potential effect without need of being materially carried out.

If our ethical judge should pass sentence on the matter, we doubt that he would acquit the carnivore on the sole ground that his prey had freely chosen to be devoured.

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In the primitive human aggregates the network of the relationships among individuals grows and extends itself progressively. The greater variety of needs and of the means to satisfy them, in addition to the possibility of communication between one being and another due to the differentiations of language, all give rise to a sphere of relationships and influences which in the animal world were only roughly outlined.

Even before it is possible to speak of a true production of objects of use that can be employed for the satisfaction of the needs and necessities of human life, a division of functions and of aptitudes to carry them out is established among the members of the first groups, who devote themselves to the tasks of harvesting wild vegetables, of hunting, of fishing and of the first rudimentary activity in the construction and conservation of shelters and in the preparation of food.

An organized society begins to form itself and with it arises the principle

of order and authority. The individuals who have a superior physical strength and nervous energy no longer resort only to muscular strength to impose fixed limits on others in the use of their time and their labor and in the enjoyment of the useful goods that have been acquired. Rules begin to be established to which the community adapts itself. Respect of these rules is imposed without the needs of using physical coercion every time; it suffices to threaten the would-be transgressor with fierce punishment and in extreme cases with death.

The individual who, driven by his primitive animality, might want to elude such impositions must either engage in a hand-to-hand combat with the leader (and probably also with the other members of the collectivity who would be ordered to back their leader in exercising the punishment) or else the individual must flee from the collectivity. But in this last case he would be compelled to satisfy his material needs less abundantly and with more risks since he would be deprived of the advantages of organized collective activity, however primitive it might be.

The human animal begins to trace his evolutionary cycle, a cycle which certainly is neither uniform and continuous nor without crises and reversals but which, in a general sense, is unrestrainable. From his original condition of unlimited personal freedom, of total autonomy of the single individual, he becomes more and more subjected to an increasingly dense network of bonds which takes the features and the names of order, authority, and law.

The general trend of this evolution is the lessening of the frequency of cases in which violence among men is consumed in its kinetic form, i.e. with struggle, corporal punishment and execution. But, at the same time, the cases in which authoritarian orders are executed without resistance become doubly more frequent, since those whom the orders are addressed to know by experience that it would not pay to elude these dictates.

A simplistic schematization and idealization of such a process leads to an abstract conception of society which sees only two entities, the individual and the collectivity, and arbitrarily assumes that all the relationships of each individual to the organized collectivity are equivalent (such as in the illusory perspective of the « Social Contract »). This theory postulates the ongoing march of the human collectivity as being conducted either by an obliging god who leads the drama towards a happy ending or else by a redeeming inspiration, more mysterious still, which is placed who knows how in each person's mind and is immanent to his way of thinking, feeling, and behaving. It is presented as a march which leads to a idyllic equilibrium in which an egalitarian order allows everybody to enjoy the benefits of the common work, while the decisions of each individual are free and freely willed.

Dialectical materialism on the contrary, scientifically sets into relief the importance of the factor of force and its influence not only when it is overtly manifested, such as in wars among peoples and classes, but also when it is applied in a potential state by means of the functioning of the machinery of authority, of law, of constituted order and of armed power. It explains that the origin and the extension of the use of force springs from the relationships in which individuals are placed as a result of the striving and the possibility to satisfy their needs.

If we analyze the ways and means by which human aggregates since

prehistory have procured their means of subsistence, as well as the first rudimentary devices, arms and tools that extend the reach of the limb of animal man to act over external bodies, we will be led to the discovery of an extremely rich variety of relationships and intermediate positions between the individual and the totality of the collectivity which are the basis of a division of this collectivity into many diverse groups, according to attributions, functions and satisfactions. This investigation furnishes us the key to the problem of force.

The essential element of that which is commonly called civilization is this: the stronger individual consumes more than the weaker one (and up until this point we remain within the field of the relationships of animal life and, if we want, we can also add here that so-called « nature », which bourgeois theories conceive of as a clever supervisor, provided for the fact that more muscles means more stomach and more food); but the stronger also arranges things in such a way that the major share of the workload falls on the weaker one. If the weaker refuses to grant the richest meal and the easiest job (or no job at all) to the stronger, then muscular superiority subdues him and inflicts on him the third humiliation of being struck.

The distinctive element of civilization, as we said, is that this simple relationship explained above is materialized innumerable times in all the acts of social life *with no need to use coercive force in its actual, kinetic form.*

The division of men into groups which are so dissimilar in their material situation of life has its basis initially in a distribution of tasks. It is this which, in a great complexity of manifestations, assures the privileged individual, family, group, or class a recognition of its position. This recognition, which has its origins in a real consideration of the initial utility of the privileged elements, leads to the formation of an attitude of submission among the victimized elements and groups. This attitude is handed down in time and becomes part of tradition since social forms have an *inertia* which is analogous to that of the physical world; due to this inertia these social forms tend to trace the same orbits and to perpetuate the same relationships if superior causes do not introduce a disruption.

Let us continue our analysis, which even the reader who is unfamiliar with the Marxist method will understand to be a schematic explanation for the sake of brevity. When for the first time the *minus habens* (the have-not) not only does not constrain his exploiter to use force in order to compel him to execute the orders, but also learns to repeat that rebellion is a great disgrace since it jeopardizes the rules and order on which everybody's salvation depends — at this point, hats off please, the Law is born.

The first kings were clever hunters, valiant warriors who risked their life and shed their blood for the defense of the tribe; the first wizards were intelligent investigators of the secrets of nature useful for curing illnesses and for the well-being of the tribe; the first masters of slaves or of wage laborers were capable organizers of the productive efforts for the best yield in the cultivation of the land or in the use of the first technologies. The initial recognition of the useful function they fulfilled led them to build the apparatus of authority and power. This apparatus permitted those who were at the top of the new and more profitable forms of social life to

appropriate, for their own enjoyment, a large portion of the increased production that had been realized.

Man first submitted the animals of other species to such a relationship. The wild ox was subjugated to the yoke for the first time only after a harsh struggle and with the sacrifice of the boldest tamers. Later, actual violence was no longer necessary in order to make the animal lower his head. The powerful effort of the ox multiplied the quantity of grain at the master's disposal and the ox, for its nourishment and for the preservation of its muscular efficiency, received a fraction of the crops.

The evolved *homo sapiens* did not wait long to apply this same relationship to his fellow-man with the rise of slavery. The adversary, defeated in a personal or in a collective conflict, the prisoner of war, crushed and hurt, is forced with further violence to work with the same economic contracts as the ox. At the beginning he may have revolted, rarely being able to overwhelm the oppressor and escape his grip; in the long run the normal situation is that the slave, even if superior to his master in muscular strength just as is the ox, suffers under his yoke and functions like the animal — only providing a much wider range of services than the beast.

Centuries pass and this system builds its own ideology, it is theorized; the priest justifies it in the name of the gods and the judge with his penalties prohibits it from being violated. There is a difference, and a superiority of the man of the oppressed class over the ox: no one could ever teach the ox to recite in a most spontaneous way, a doctrine according to which the drag of the plough is an immense advantage for him, a healthy and civilized joy, a fulfillment of God's will and an accomplishment of the sanctity of the law, nor will it ever happen that the ox officially acknowledges all this by casting votes in a ballot box.

Our long discourse on such an elementary subject aims at this result: to credit the fundamental factor of force with the sum-total of effects which are derived from it not only when force is employed in its actual state, with violence against the physical person, but also and above all when it acts in its potential or virtual state without the uproar of the fight and the shedding of blood.

Crossing the centuries (and avoiding a repetition of the analysis of the successive historical forms of productive relationships, of class privileges, and of political power) we must come to an application of this result and this criterion to present-day capitalist society.

It is thus possible to defeat the tremendous contemporary mobilization of deceit, the big universal production which provides for the ideological subjugation of the masses to the sinister dictates of the dominant minorities. The fundamental trick of all this machinery is «atrocitism»: that is, the exhibition (which incidentally is often corroborated by powerful falsifications of facts) of all the episodes of material aggression in which social violence, as a result of the relationships of force, is manifested and consumed in blows, gunshots, in killings and in atomic massacres — and this last would certainly have appeared as the most infamous if the producer of this show had not had tremendous success in stupifying the world.

It will thus be possible to give the proper consideration, the quantitatively and qualitatively preponderant importance, to the countless cases in which aggression, resulting always in misery, suffering and destruction

of human life on a tremendous scale, is exercised without resistance, without clashes and — as we said at the beginning — without bloodshed even in times and places in which social peace and order seem to be dominant. This is the social peace and order that is boasted of by the professional pimps of spoken and written propaganda as being the full realization of civilization, order, and freedom.

In comparing the importance of both factors — violence in an actual state and violence in a potential state — it will be evident that despite of all the hypocrisies and scandalmongerings, the second factor is the predominant one. It is only on such a basis that it is possible to build a doctrine and to wage a struggle capable of breaking the limits of the present world of exploitation and oppression.

II. The Bourgeois Revolution

The research we have engaged in regarding the « dosage » of violence exercised in its actual state (through physical beatings and injuries) and violence left at its potential state (by subduing the dominated to the will of the dominators through the complex play of penalties threatened but not exercised) if applied to all social forms which preceded the bourgeois revolution would prove to be too lengthy. For this reason we shall consider the question by starting from a comparison of the social world of the « *ancien régime* » which preceded the great revolution with that of capitalist society in which we have the great joy to be living.

According to a first and well known interpretation, the revolution which carried into effect the principles of freedom, equality and fraternity, as expressed in the elective institutions, was a universal and final conquest for mankind. This was claimed on the basis 1) that it radically improved the conditions of life of all the members of society by freeing them from the old oppressions and by opening up for them the joy of a new world and 2) that it eliminated the historical eventuality of any further social conflict which could violently shatter the newly established institutions and relationships.

A second interpretation which is less naïve and less impudently apologetic about the delightfulness of the bourgeois system, recognizes that it still harbors large differences of social conditions and economic exploitation to the detriment of the working class and that further transformations of society must be carried out through more or less brusque or gradual means. However it maintains with absolute obstinacy that the conquests of the revolution that brought the capitalist class to power represented a substantial advancement also for the other classes which, thanks to it, gained the inestimable advantage of legal and civil liberties. Therefore, it alleges that the question is only that of proceeding on the road that has already been opened up ; that is to say, it is claimed that all that is necessary is to eliminate the remaining forms of despotism and exploitation — after having eliminated the most sever and atrocious ones — all the while keeping hold of those first fundamental conquests. This worn out interpretation is served to us in many forms. This is the case when Roosevelts, from the summit of the pyramid of power, deign to add new liberties, freedom from need and freedom from fear, to the well known liberties of the old

literature (and this at a time when a war of unprecedented violence was raging, bringing an extermination and starvation of human beings beyond any previous limit). This is also the case when, from the base of the pyramid, a naive representative of the vulgar popular politicking formulates, with new words, the old concoction of democracy and socialism by chattering about social liberties which should be added to those that have already been achieved.

We should not need to recall that the Marxist analysis of the historical process of the rise of capitalism has nothing to do with the two interpretations we have mentioned.

In fact, Marx never said that the degree of exploitation, oppression and abuse in capitalist society was inferior to that of feudal society but, on the contrary, he explicitly proved the opposite.

Let us say right now, in order to avoid any serious misunderstanding, that Marx proclaimed that it was a historical necessity for the Fourth Estate to fight side by side with the revolutionary bourgeoisie against the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the clergy. He condemned the doctrines of « reactionary » socialism according to which the workers — warned in time of the wild exploitation to which they would be subjected by the capitalists in the manufacturing and industrial plants — should have blocked with the leading feudal class against the capitalists. The most orthodox and left-wing Marxism recognizes that in the first historical phase which follows the bourgeois revolution, the strategy of the proletariat could not be other than that of a resolute alliance with the young Jacobin bourgeoisie. These clear-cut classical positions are not derived at all from the assumption that the new economic system is less bestial and oppressive than the previous one. They result instead from the dialectical conception of history which explains the succession of events as being determined by the productive forces which, through constant expansion and utilization of always new resources, weigh down upon the institutional forms and the established systems of power, thus causing crises and catastrophes.

Thus revolutionary socialists have been following the victories of modern capitalism for more than a century in its impressive expansion all over the world and they consider this as useful conditions of social development. This is so because the essential characteristics of capitalism (such as the concentration of productive forces, machines and men into powerful units, the transformation of all use values into exchange values and the interconnection of all the economies of the world) constitute the only path that leads, after new gigantic social conflicts have taken place, to the realization of the new communist society. All this remains true and necessary although we know perfectly well that the modern industrial capitalist society is worse and more ferocious than those which preceded it.

Of course, it is difficult for this conclusion to be digested by minds which have been shaped by bourgeois ideology and which have been ingrained with the idealisms pullulating from the romantic period of the liberal democratic revolutions. In fact if our thesis is judged according to sentimental, literary and rhetorical criteria, it cannot but arouse the banal indignation from those righteous people who would not fail to confront us with their jumbled erudition about the cruelties of the old despotisms — the *autos-da-fé*, the Holy Inquisition, the *corvées* of the serfs, the right of

the king as well as the last feudal squire to dispose of the life and death of their subjects, the *jus primae noctis* and so forth — thus showing us that pre-bourgeois societies were the theater for daily incessant violence and that their institutions were dripped with blood.

But if the research is founded on a scientific and statistical basis and if we consider the amount of human work extorted without compensation in order to allow a privileged enjoyment of wealth ; if we consider the poverty and misery of the lower social strata ; if we consider the lives which are sacrificed and broken as a result of economic hardships and of the crises and clashes which break out in the form of private feuds, civil wars, or military conflicts among states ; if we consider all this, the heaviest index shall have to be computed and attributed to this civilized, democratic and parliamentarian bourgeois society.

In response to the scandalized accusation of those who reproach the communists for aiming at the destruction of private property, Marx answered — and it is a fundamental point — that one of the basic aspects of the social upheaval brought forth by capitalism was the violent, inhuman expropriation of the artisan laborer. Before the rise of the large manufactures and mechanized factories, the isolated craftsman (or one who worked in association with a few relatives and apprentices) was bound to his tools as well as to the products of his work by a factual, technical and economic tie. The right of ownership over his few implements and over the limited amount of commodities produced in his shop was, in fact, legally recognized with no limitation. The coming of capitalism crushes this patriarchal and almost idyllic system. It defrauds the intelligent industrious craftsman of his modest possessions and drags him, dispossessed and starving, into the forced labor camps of the modern bourgeois enterprise. While this upheaval unfolds, often with open violence and always under the pressure of inexorable economic forces, the bourgeois ideologists define its legal aspects as a conquest of liberty which frees the working citizen from the fetters of the medieval guilds and trade rules, transforming him into a free man in a free state.

Such was the process which manufacturing industry underwent on the whole, and the presentation, in Marxist terms, of the development of agricultural production is not much different. To be sure, the system of feudal servitude obliged the laborer of the soil to give up a large portion of his production for the benefit of the dominant classes, i.e. the nobility and the clergy. But the serf who was bound to the soil maintained a technical and productive tie with the earth itself and with a part of the products, a tie which indirectly offered him a guarantee of a secure, quiet life (a situation which was also due to the low population density and to the limited exchange of products with the large urban centers).

The capitalist revolution breaks those relationships and claims to free the serf-peasant from a whole series of abuses. However the land laborer, reduced to a pure proletarian, follows the destiny of the slave-army of industrial laborers, or else he is transformed into a fully legal manager or owner of a small plot of land, only to be dispossessed by the capitalist usurer, the tax collector, or through the melting away of the value of money.

It is not in the scope of this work to go into a detailed analysis of this process. However the elementary considerations we have made will be

enough to answer those who pretend they have never heard before that Marx considered the new bourgeois society to be more infamous than feudal society.

The essential point to establish is this: the differentiating criterion which must be used in order to know if a new historical movement should be supported or combatted is not whether or not this movement has realized and accorded more equality, justice and freedom, which would be an inconsistent and trivially literary criterion. Instead it is the totally different and almost always opposite criterion of asking whether the new situation has promoted and brought forth the development of more powerful and complex productive forces at society's disposal.

These more highly developed forces are the indispensable condition for the future organization of society itself in the sense of a more efficient utilization of labor which will be able to provide a larger amount of consumer goods for the benefit of all.

It was not only useful but also absolutely necessary for the bourgeoisie, by means of civil war, to demolish the institutional obstacles which hampered the development of large factories and the modern exploitation of the land. If we consider these results, it does not matter that the first and immediate consequence, a transitory one on a larger historical scale, was that of making the chains of the social disparity and the exploitation of the labor force heavier and more hideous.

* * *

The critique of scientific socialism has clearly shown that the great social transformation achieved by capitalism (a transformation which historically has fully matured and which in turn is fertile with further great developments) cannot be defined either as a radical liberation of the vast masses or as a meaningful leap forward in their standard of living. The transformation of the institutions concerns only the mode in which the small, dominant, privileged minority aligns and organizes itself in society.

The members of the pre-bourgeois privileged classes formed a system of complex hierarchies. The high-ranking ecclesiastics belonged to the ordered and well-organized network of the church; the noblemen, who also occupied the highest civil and military offices, were hierarchically arranged in the feudal system which had at its summit the King.

It is quite different in the new type of society (and it must be understood that we are referring here to the first and classical type of bourgeois economic society based on the unlimited freedom of production and exchange and leaving aside the great differences between the various nations and historical phases). In this society the members of the higher and privileged stratum are almost totally free from ties of interdependence since each factory owner has no personal obligations towards his colleagues and competitors in the management of his company and in the choice of his initiatives. This technical and social change, in the ideological field, takes the appearance of a historical turn from the realm of authority to that of freedom.

It is clear however that this conquest, this sensational change of scenery, did not take place on the theater of the entire social collectivity but only

within the narrow circles of the fortunate stratum of full and gilded bellies, to which we may add the small following of accomplices and direct agents, i.e. politicians, journalists, priests, teachers, high officials and the rest.

The mass of half-empty bellies are not absent in this gigantic tragedy — on the contrary, they participate in it fighting with the sacrifice of their lives and blood. What they are excluded from is the participation in the benefits of this transformation.

The conquest of legal freedom, which all charters and constitutions claim to be the heritage of all citizens does not concern the majority who are even more exploited and starved than before ; in reality this conquest is only the *internal affair* of a minority. All the contemporary and historical questions which have been placed again before the nauseating postulate of freedom and democracy must be resolved in light of this approach.

On the scale of the individual, the materialist thesis states that since the mind functions only when the stomach is nourished, the theoretical right to freely think and to freely express one's thought in fact concerns only he who actually has the possibility of such superior activity. Of course it is perfectly contestable whether those who constantly boast of having attained this superior activity actually should be credited with it, but in any case it is certainly precluded for the mass of poorly-fed bellies.

The harshness of this thesis customarily unchains a sequence of bitter reproaches against the « vulgar obscene materialism ». This materialism is accused of taking into account only the factor of economics and nourishment, ignoring the glorious realm of spiritual life and refusing to acknowledge those satisfactions which are not reducible to physical sensations, i.e. those which man is supposed to draw from the use of reason, from the exercise of civil liberties, and from the enjoyment of electoral rights by which the citizen chooses his representatives and the heads of state.

Here we have nothing new to present and at the most we will only verify well-known theories with recent facts. Therefore in regard to these reproaches it is necessary once again to establish the real scope of the economic determinism professed by Marxists as opposed to a common deformation which is more obstinate in refusing to disappear than scabies or other contagious diseases. This deformation reduces the problem to the petty individual scale and pretends that the political, philosophical or religious opinions of each individual are derived from his economic relationships in society and mechanically spring forth from his desires and interests. Hence the large landowner will be a right-wing reactionary bigot ; the bourgeois businessman will be a conservative in regards to economics but sometimes, at least until recently, vaguely leftist in philosophy and politics ; the petty bourgeois will be more or less democratic ; and the worker will be a materialist, a socialist and a revolutionary.

Such a Marxism, custom-made for the bourgeois democrats, is very convenient for optimistically declaring that since the economically oppressed workers constitute the great majority of the population, it will not be long before they have control of the representative and executive organs and, later on, all wealth and capital. Naturally for the rapid movement of this merry-go-round it will be of great advantage to swing the political opinions, beliefs and movements towards the left, forming blocs and jumbled conglomerations with all the slime of the middle strata which supposedly

are progressively evolving and taking a position against the politics and privileges of the upper classes.

In place of this stupid caricature, Marxism draws a totally different picture. While speaking of the ideological, political and mystical superstructures which find their explanation in the underlying economic conditions and relationships, Marxism establishes a law and a method which have a general and social relevance. In order to explain the significance of the ideology which, in a given historical epoch, prevails among a people who are governed through a given regime, we must base our analysis on data concerning the productive techniques and the relationships of the distribution of goods and products. In other words, we must base it on the class relationships between the privileged groups and the collectivities of producers.

Briefly, and in plain words, the law of economic determinism states that in each epoch the general prevailing opinions, the political, philosophical and religious ideas which are shared and followed by the great majority are those which correspond to the interests of a dominant minority who holds all power and privilege in its hands. Hence the priests and wisemen of the ancient oriental peoples justify despotism and human sacrifice, those of the pagan civilizations preach that slavery is just and beneficial, those of the christian age exalt property and monarchy, and those of the epoch of democracy and the Enlightenment canonize the economic and juridical systems suitable to capitalism.

When a particular type of society and production enters into a crisis and when forces arise in the technical and productive domain which tend to break its limits, class conflicts become more acute and are reflected in the rise of new doctrines of opposition and subversion which are condemned and attacked by the dominant institutions. When a society is in crisis, one of the characteristics of the phase which opens up is the continuous relative decrease in the number of those who benefit from the existing regime; nevertheless, the revolutionary ideology does not prevail in the masses but is crystalized only in a vanguard minority that is joined even by elements of the dominant class. The masses will change ideologically, philosophically and religiously through the force of inertia and through the formidable means utilized by every dominant class for the molding of opinions, but this transformation will occur only after a long period following the collapse of the old structures of domination. We can even state that a revolution is truly mature when the actual physical fact of the inadequacy of the systems of production places these systems into conflict even with the material interests of a large section of the privileged class itself. And this is true in spite of the fact that the old traditional dictates of the dominant opinions, with their tremendous reactionary inertia, continue to be endlessly repeated by the mass which is the victim of it as well as by the superior layers which are the depositories of the regime.

Thus slavery definitively collapsed, in spite of an obstinate resistance on the level of ideology and that of force, when it proved to be a system which was scarcely profitable for the exploitation of labor and which was of little advantage for the slave-masters.

To say it briefly, the liberation of an oppressed class does not proceed first from the liberation of the spirit and then of the body but it must emancipate the stomach well before it can affect the brain.

The forces for deceptively mobilizing the opinions of the masses in a way which conforms to the interests of the privileged class are, in capitalist society, much more powerful than in pre-bourgeois societies. Schools, the press, public speeches, radios, motion pictures, and associations of all kinds represent means which are a hundred times more powerful than those that were available to societies in the past. In the capitalist regime, thought is a commodity and it is made to order by utilizing the necessary equipment and economic means for its mass production. Germany and Italy had their Ministries of Propaganda and People's Culture, and Great Britain, in turn, instituted its Ministry of Information at the beginning of World War II in order to monopolize and control the whole flow of news. In the period between the two World Wars, the dispatch of news was already a monopoly of the powerful network of the British press agencies ; today such a monopoly obviously has crossed the Atlantic. Thus as long as military operations were favorable for the Germans the daily production of tall tales and lies from the English information factory attained a level that the fascist organizations could only envy. To give one example, at the time of the incredible German military operation to conquer Norway in 48 hours, the British radio broadcasted the details of a disastrous defeat of the German fleet in the Skagerrak !

The social factor of the manipulation of ideas, which ranges from the falsification of the news to the fabrication of ready-made critics and opinions, is of no small importance (in fact, in the news industry today the various versions of an event are already compiled before the event actually happens, so even if a reporter seems to tell it like it is, it still remains a falsehood — the event that is reported is always the event which must take place according to this or that state or this or that party). This manipulations of ideas is a component of that mass of virtual violence, that is to say, of violence which does not take the form of a brutal imposition carried out with coercive means but which nonetheless is the result and the manifestation of real forces that deform and modify the actual situation.

The modern type of democratic bourgeois society does not joke with the administration of actual (or kinetic) violence through its police and military apparatus — and in reality it exceeds the level of kinetic violence used by the old regimes which are so slandered by bourgeois democracy. But alongside of this, it brings the volume of that application of virtual violence to a level never known before, a level which is comparable to the unprecedented level of production and the concentration of wealth. Due to this, sections of the masses appear which, out of apparently free choices of confessions, opinions, and beliefs, act against their own objective interests and accept the theoretical justifications of social relationships and events which cause their misery and even their destruction.

The passage from the pre-bourgeois forms to the present society has thus increased and not diminished the intensity and the frequency of the factor of oppression and coercion.

And when Marxism, for all these reasons we have explained, advocates the full completion of that fundamental historical step, we certainly do not intend to forget or to contradict this fundamental position.

It is only with criteria which are consistent with those we have established above, that we can judge and unravel one of the burning ques-

tions of today, i.e. the transformation of the bourgeois method of administration and government corresponding to the rise of the dictatorial and fascist totalitarian regimes.

Such a transformation does not represent a change of one ruling class for another, or even less a revolutionary rupture of the modes of production. But while making this critique it is necessary to avoid the banal errors which, in line with the deviations of Marxism we have been refuting, would lead to attributing to the democratic-parliamentary form and phase a lesser intensity and density of class violence.

This criterion, even if it were in keeping with the facts, would not in any case be sufficient to induce us to support and defend the democratic-parliamentary phase, for the same dialectical reasons that we have used in evaluating the previous historical changes. But an analysis of this question can demonstrate that to refuse the temptation of considering only *actual* violence and to take into account, on the contrary, the whole volume of potential violence which is inherent to the life and dynamics of society, is the only way to avoid falling into the deception of preferring (even if it is in a subordinate and *relative* manner) the hypocritical method and the noxious atmosphere of liberal democracy.

(To be continued.)

ARTICLES PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH

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- « Proletarian Dictatorship » and « Socialist Society » in the New Chinese Constitution.
- Parliamentarism at the Second Congress of the Comintern (Introduction ; Theses on Parliamentarism Presented by the Communist Abstentionist Fraction of the Italian Socialist Party ; Theses on the Communist Parties and Parliamentarism Adopted by the Second Congress of the Comintern ; The Debate : Speeches of Bukharin, Bordiga, Lenin).

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The Cycle of the «Awakening of Asia» is Closed Only to Reopen Again on a Higher Level

In May 1913, in saluting both the developments of the political situation in China and the first social and anti-imperialist movements in the Dutch Indies, Lenin wrote :

«World capitalism and the 1905 movement in Russia have finally awakened Asia. Hundreds of millions of the downtrodden and benighted have awakened from mediaeval stagnation to a new life and are rising to fight for elementary human rights and democracy.

«The workers of the advanced countries follow with interest and inspiration this powerful growth of the liberation movement, in all its various forms, in every part of the world. The bourgeoisie of Europe, fearing the might of the labour movement, is looking for assistance from the forces of reaction, militarism, clericalism and obscurantism. But the proletariat of the European countries and the young democracy of Asia, fully confident of its strength and with abiding faith in the masses, are advancing to take the place of this decadent and moribund bourgeoisie.

«The awakening of Asia and the beginning of the struggle for power by the advanced proletariat of Europe are a symbol of the new phase in world history that began early this century» (Works, Vol. 19, p. 66).

Since this time, history has followed a much slower, tortuous and tormented path than that which had been envisioned in 1913, and which had seemed to be rapidly leading to the creation of modern bourgeois nations on the ruins of age-old empires and on the ruins of an imperialist domination which had been super-imposed upon these ancient forms.

This tumultuous period, with the young republican China at its epicenter, was opened up primarily after the end of World War I and culminated in the tragic years of 1926-1927. During this time it had been conceivable that the young Asian proletariat of the great ports and industrial cities and, in its wake, the peasant masses who were in revolt in the immense Chinese countryside, were at the point of realizing the «democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry». It had seemed that this movement would open up a cycle of double revolution and, at all events, that it would lead the bourgeois revolution up to its end in the «plebeian» (not the «Prussian») manner, thus striking a fatal blow at imperialism.

These immense potentials were destroyed by the Stalinist counter-revolution which placed the proletarian vanguard in the tow of the comprador «national» bourgeoisie, condemning it not only to follow a movement of which it must and could take the lead but also causing it to fall disarmed under the blows of its temporary «ally». Since then in almost all cases, the ruin of the world-wide communist revolutionary movement has permitted the most moderate national

leaderships to break the back of the most radical elements and to finally take the leadership of the powerful wave of independence movements.

And nevertheless the pressure of the great peasant masses, hungry for land, and also of the super-exploited industrial proletarians have remained at such a level that the « awakening of Asia » has not ceased to force its way, penetrating into the smallest gaps which open up in the precarious equilibrium of the local classes and states, and finally bursting out with violence and hurling the social forces that have been engendered by exploitation and oppression against the old society and imperialism.

The conquest of independance in India, the proclamation of the People's Republic in China, the Korean War, the Vietnamese Insurrection and the two act drama of a war against France then against the United States, and finally the Indonesian revolt led by Sukarno are all part of this process which leads to the actual liberation of Vietnam and Cambodia. However, the Indochinese peninsula, with its hundred million people who are on the most part extremely poor peasants, still remains as an enormous powder keg and it is not very probable that the diplomatic accords that have been signed under the auspices of the great powers will remain in effect for very long or that the entirety of Southeast Asia will be prevented from experiencing the awakening of a further process of unification.

This historic course has not been concretized in *profound* social transformations, something which would only be made possible through the passage of the leadership of the movement to the proletariat, followed by the poor peasantry. However, the local bourgeoisie in spite of its narrow horizons has brought to an end, through the Vietnam victory, that cycle of colonial emancipation which was opened up in the first ten years of the century, that is to say the cycle of colonial emancipation which *does not* correspond to the national revolutionary cycle. Just as the Marxist revolutionaries in 1913, we applaud this event with enthusiasm.

We applaud it for the same reasons that they did. It is not because we give an absolute value to national independence as does the bourgeoisie. Quite on the contrary, if we greet this victory it is because *the birth of modern nations on the ruins of a past which is dominated by mediaeval social forms and by the imperialist yoke opens the way free to the explosion of the modern class struggles* — that is to say the arena of social conflicts is enlarged and enriched by new potentialities. Certainly the American, German and Japanese bourgeoisies are already making their calculations, counting on finding (and in cases actually beginning to find) a fertile terrain for their investments. And Russian and Chinese capitalisms do not have the intention of remaining simple spectators for certainly the local Vietnamese bourgeoisie is prepared to collaborate with them in the oppression and exploitation of the workers and poor peasants. But the gigantic thrust which these workers and peasants have impressed on the movement and which, in turn, the movement has given to them, will not fail to unleash them in the next few years and maybe within the next few months, on the front of the class conflicts, on the front of social antagonisms — with it this time being disengaged from the survivals of national aspirations. And their movement, as Marx and Engels have already foreseen, will have repercussions on the rest of the planet, even to the point of reaching the vital centers of imperialist capitalism and drawing the Euro-American proletariat out of the lethargy where opportunism has plunged it.

We greet the closure of this cycle, with all its limitations, its delays, and its compromises (which Marxist theory had foreseen) as the beginning of a new and *decisive* cycle of much greater and more prolific battles !

The Bitter Fruits of Thirty Years of Democratic Peace and Capitalist Prosperity

(The following manifesto has been distributed by our militants on the official celebration of the 30eth anniversary of the defeat of Germany in the 2nd imperialist conflict.)

WORKERS, COMRADES !

«'Remember the imperialist war!' These are the first words addressed by the Communist International to every working man and woman; wherever they live and whatever language they speak. Remember that because of the existence of capitalist society a handful of imperialists were able to force the workers of the different countries for four long years to cut each other's throats. Remember that the war of the bourgeoisie conjured up in Europe and throughout the world the most frightful famine and the most appalling misery. Remember, that without the overthrow of capitalism the repetition of such robber wars is not only possible, but inevitable.»

Such are the words which the Communist International inscribed in its statutes two years after the end of the first world slaughter. This was a call to proletarians of the entire world to the struggle for the revolutionary conquest of power and for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is «the only possible way to liberate mankind from the horrors of capitalism». In its heroic combat to slay the capitalist monster in a war-devastated Europe, the working class was defeated and the great internationalist message of the Bolshevik October was betrayed by Stalinism. Twenty years after the International's warning, the proletarians were once again called to shed their blood in a war which was presented to them as the final war, that of good against evil, of civilization against barbarism, of liberty against slavery, of democracy against fascism, of the forces of progress against those of darkness, of humanity at last united against its cruel divisions, and of well-being and prosperity against misery and hunger.

It has been thirty years since the end of this pretended «war of liberation». Once again the parties who claim to represent your final interests and the trade unions who pretend to defend your immediate interests urge you to celebrate the democracy which was victorious thanks to the Resistance, the peace which was assured thanks to the Great Alliance on the battlefields, the progress which was guaranteed thanks to National Reconstruction, and even the victory of socialism

which is pretended to be possible from now on by the means of a peaceful, civilized, and legal evolution, without the utilization of revolutionary class violence.

The facts harshly unmask all these promises which Marxism, from the time of its birth, has denounced as being lies.

Not only have these last thirty years not known a single hour of peace but they have consisted of a succession of bloody conflicts which the shameless dominant class dares to qualify as «local», while actually these conflicts set whole continents ablaze and massacre entire peoples who are in revolt against an age-old oppression. On the field of battle as in the arena of commercial war, the pretended «united» nations have not ceased to struggle among themselves and to attempt to subdue each other. After the hot war, there followed the cold war; and the cold war was followed by the joint domination of the world by the two most powerful «allies» of the East and the West. However, all along the uncertain and troubled frontiers of this «peaceful coexistence», these two avid merchants have disposed of mountains of cannons, tanks, and missiles in order to keep guard over these borders.

It is on the ashes of the second imperialist massacre — for the pretended «anti-fascist war» has been nothing other than this — that the economy has been reconstructed and that there arose the universal reign of well-being, of perpetually expanding affluence and of «work for all». The new golden age which was promised in order to obtain your discipline at the front and, after the massacre, at the factory, soon vanished into thin air: for many years this «new era» has been synonymous with famine for the «third world»; today in all parts of the world it has for its name high prices, low wages, recession, unemployment, layoffs, a lower standard of living and an increase in the intensity of work.

Democracy has won, but it has inherited from fascism an always more heavy, more centralized and more oppressive state machinery from which the «free and equal» citizens vainly believe they can escape because the state accords them the right (just as one administers a drug) to express their opinion at always shorter intervals through the inoffensive means of the ballot. The promises of «independence» and «equality» of peoples vanish in front of the reality of always more profound disequilibriums between the rich and the poor countries and an always more severe dependence of the small nations on the superpowers of the world. In the same way, the harmony between classes under the banner of the eternal principles of «liberty, equality and fraternity» becomes obliterated in front of a reality which is vainly attempted to be hidden, that of capital's thirst for exploitation and expansion which is irreconcilable with the vital and elementary requirements of the workers.

As for the «national ways to socialism» — these multicolored versions of Stalinism's infamous «socialism in one country» — they are also contradicted by the facts. In those countries which claim to have arrived at this goal — Russia or China, Cuba or the «people's democracies» — the market, wages, money and profit still reign; in short, there exist all other things which the proletarians suffer from in all the other countries. And in those places where socialism is held out as a bright prospect always near but never attained, one encounters only the servile submission of the «workers» parties and trade unions to the state and its laws. They offer to the dominant class a co-management of the economic and political crisis of the regime (that is to say, through the shedding of the sweat and blood of the proletarians); and what's more they even offer to help reinforce its arsenal for maintaining order and for safeguarding the bourgeois institutions, from the police to the army (and even the church).

WORKERS, COMRADES !

Such is the reality of this « progressive democracy » which is celebrated as a conquest of the anti-fascist war, of the Resistance and of the democratic Reconstruction — a democracy which is the utmost version of popular and national fronts and of the conciliation between classes under the banner of the « general and common interests of the country ».

This reality is that of the increasing domination of capital. It is the same reality which Nazism and Fascism pretended to hide behind the deceitful veil of their « anti-plutocratic » crusades.

This only confirms the powerful truth of Lenin's words :

« Another reason why the omnipotence of « wealth » is more certain in a democratic republic is that it does not depend on defects in the political machinery or on the faulty political shell of capitalism. A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and, therefore, once capital has gained possession of this very best shell [...] it establishes its power so securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois-democratic republic can shake it ».

What significance do these words have if it is not the condemnation without appeal of all the propositions of « structural reforms », of « new politics » or of the alternate exercise of power by the Right and the Left within the framework of the bourgeois state, that is to say all those means by which you are urged to aid capitalism in overcoming this most recent of its cyclical crises — just as you were urged to aid it thirty years ago, by sacrificing your life.

The present crisis falls upon a world sick with « too much civilization, too much industry, and too much commerce ». Capitalism can surmount it only in the manner described by Marx and Engels 127 years ago : « on the one hand, by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones »; in short by the means of a new world massacre, of a new cycle of insane rush towards a fictitious well-being founded on increasing exchanges of commodities. That is to say, the crisis can only be surmounted on the backs of the proletarians, only « by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented ».

The infernal cycle of artificial prosperities which are paid for by devastating crises, and the illusory periods of peace which are paid for by awful wars, can be broken by the proletariat only through the destruction of the regime which necessarily provokes all these :

« Bourgeois states are most varied in form, but their essence is the same: all these states, whatever their form, in the final analysis are inevitably the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. The transition from capitalism to communism is certainly bound to yield a tremendous abundance and variety of political forms, but the essence will inevitably be the same: the dictatorship of the proletariat » (Lenin).

These words sum up the whole sense of our struggle FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WORLD CLASS PARTY, THE INDISPENSABLE ORGAN FOR THE CONQUEST AND THE DICTATORIAL EXERCISE OF POWER BY THE PROLETARIAT.

For us it is not a question of announcing the coming of a supreme confrontation between the exploiting and the exploited classes through reciting an ancient « credo », while passively and confidently waiting for better days.

Today the proletarian struggle is terribly late with respect to the capitalist crisis. However capitalism has increased by gigantic proportions the mass of dispossessed whom it has sent through the harsh school of the industrial forced labor camps and it has also increased the charge of potential antagonisms which are kindled by modern exploitation and oppression. The outburst of class conflicts requires the existence of social fractures which the crisis provokes.

The explosion of these class conflicts, as well as their generalization, is hindered and retarded by the weight of terrible decades and by the absence of the Marxist party. However, the forces of the class renewal and of the future revolution are forged in the present, whether it is a prosperous present or one of crisis. They are forged IN OPPOSING THE UNITED FRONT OF THE BOURGEOISIE AND OPPORTUNISM WITH THE SOLIDARITY OF ALL THE EXPLOITED IN THEIR STRUGGLE FOR BREAD AND FOR WORK.

This struggle today signifies the rupture of all agreements of social peace and the refusal of all so-called common sacrifices by demanding large wage increases, a draconian reduction in the workday, a full wage for workers who are laid off, unemployed, or victims of lockouts, and the suppression of all discriminations among workers.

This defensive struggle is not yet an attack against capitalism, but it is the indispensable condition for it because «by cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital, [the working class] would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement» (Marx). This struggle is not yet a general political struggle against the existing order, although it is the terrain on which this latter is prepared. This preparation must be made with the methods and weapons which break with the submission to the «superior requirements» of the national economy, to the thirst for investment and expansion, to the laws of the bourgeois state, and to the lie of the common interests between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Without these methods and weapons the revolution cannot win.

The only effective weapons are those which refuse all solidarity with the bourgeoisie and with its state which oppresses the colonies, the semi-colonies or other weaker states. They are those which aim at a fraternal union with the brothers of the colonies in a common struggle against a common oppressor. They are those which denounce all common interest with the bourgeoisie in its control of immigration and which seek a fraternal union of workers above the limits of nationality. They are those which deny all solidarity with the bourgeoisie in its rush towards «foreign markets» and in industrial and commercial competition. They are those which aim at the FRATERNAL UNION OF PROLETARIANS BEYOND ALL FRONTIERS, as the indispensable condition for defeating the bourgeoisie's attempts tomorrow to hurl you into new imperialist feuds where you once again will be called to serve as cannon fodder.

The only methods, the only effective weapons, are those which solely obey the iron rules and the urgent necessities of the Class War, from the strike of solidarity between the workers of all different trades today, up to the armed insurrection tomorrow. Only the refusal of all forms of bourgeois political domination and the resolute decision to fight it can allow you to use these weapons without limits and reservations.

From the right as well as from the left comes the call for the working class to make «difficult sacrifices» for the fatherland that is in danger of death. The workers must prepare themselves for all sacrifices, but provided that it be FOR THEIR OWN CAUSE. Their war cry is:

WORKERS HAVE NO COUNTRY! THEY HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT THEIR CHAINS! THEY HAVE A WORLD TO WIN!

International Communist Party.

Summaries of Our International Press

PROGRAMME COMMUNISTE N° 67

● Cours de l'impérialisme mondial

The Course of World Imperialism

In fully confirming the Marxist theory of the cyclical movement of capitalist production with its necessary alternation of periods of medium activity, prosperity, overproduction, crisis and stagnation, the world economic crisis of 1975 has burst out following a succession of minor recessions during which the slackening of productive activity in some countries was compensated for by a relative growth in others. This crisis has hit all the great industrialized nations of the « western » bloc and it has been — and is still — characterized by 1) a general and violent fall of production (the charts we have compiled and reproduced show clearly the extent of this and its simultaneous occurrence in these countries), 2) a decrease in world trade and 3) a tendency of prices to fall in some sectors and a slowing down or a cessation of their rise in others. The consequences for the working class, as foreseen by Marxist theory, are those of a generalized impoverishment, expressed by a constant growth in unemployment and by a fall in real wages which is due not only to inflation but also to the steps taken by all the governments to impose a price freeze on the labor force. And if the so-called « socialist » countries seemed relatively protected from the crisis until now, this is not due to the superiority of a mode of production which is falsely called « different » but to their still low degree of integration in the world market.

There are two possible prospects for the immediate future of capitalism, both of which are equally dramatic for the working class: a prolongation of the crisis and as a consequence an increase in unemployment and a growing pressure on the wages; or a recovery accompanied (or more exactly conditioned by) a « rationalization » which as the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie predict, would be accompanied by the expulsion of a large part of the labor force from the productive process, an acceleration of the inflationary spiral, a worsening of the general conditions of life of the working class, and in both cases by the vanishing of the « benefits » that capitalism pretended to have guaranteed to the working class during the boom period of the reconstruction after World War II.

● Projet de programme d'action du Parti Communiste d'Italie, 1922

Draft Program of Action of the Communist Party of Italy, 1922

The « Draft Program of Action of the Communist Party of Italy » was prepared during the last months of 1922 in view of the IVth Congress of the Communist International. We are publishing it as an illuminating example of the way tactics must be defined in coherence with the principles and taking into account, in a most frank and realistic way, the balance of power between the classes in a particular situation. This situation was the bourgeois counter-offensive which utilized the legal force of the democratic state and also the « illegal » or fascist forces. This publication, therefore, has no academic or even historiographical aims. It provides the militants with a precious weapon in the always present and always difficult task of harmonizing practical action, in its various and complex aspects, with a strict adherence to theory.

At the same time it is a decisive reply to the historical deformations of the « leftist » intellectuals who never cease to fling accusations of « schematism », of unreality and, worse yet, of arrogant and metaphysical passivity, at the only current in the West which defended the fundamentals of the revolutionary doctrine restored by Lenin and which gave it a coherent practical application in the

struggle on two fronts against social-democratic and centrist opportunism, and against the forces unleashed by the bourgeois counter-revolution under its fascist and democratic mask. It is certain that the Left — to which the official and unofficial historiographers apply the epithet « Bordigist » — did not draw from this counter-revolutionary wave a pretext to oppose it with a so-called « democratic alternative » as did Gramsci (who is beloved, and not by chance, by leftists of all shades). It is just as certain (as we show in the introduction which precedes the text) that to the conviction that the revolutionary perspective is the only perspective that communists, if they are true communist, can oppose to the efforts of the bourgeoisie to maintain itself and survive, the Left has provided a realistic and dialectical appreciation of the forces at work and a body of articulated directives of action aimed at defending the physiognomy of the party and its influence on the masses, as well as making it an active army in the service of the worldwide aims of the communist movement. It is on the basis of these principles that the « Italian » Left, from 1922, placed itself as the only barrier in the West against the degeneration of the Communist International and, from 1926, against the Stalinist counter-revolution whose triumph has fed — under the auspices of Gramsci — the most rotten opportunist currents (Togliatti, Thorez, Thaelmann) that the worker's movement has ever known.

● Portugal : du 25 avril à l'austérité

Portugal : From April 25 to Austerity

In Portugal's situation of economic backwardness, in its crisis of colonial domination, and in its growing dependence on Europe — all of which Salazarism was incapable of dealing with — the guarantee of « progress in order », and especially progress with austerity, could only come from the army. This was especially true since the « civilian society », represented by the democratic and « workers » parties who dreamed of a government above classes harmonizing their divergent interests, were only looking for someone, i.e. the military, capable of building this government for them. What the Trotskyists consider as a « crisis of leadership » for the bourgeoisie had simply been the cunningness to entrust its now « independent » military apparatus with the thankless but historically necessary task of restoring society to a « normal » situation.

It is in this light that the role played by socialist and « communist » opportunism clearly appears as defeatist not only in respect to the historical interests of the working class but to its immediate interests as well. As for the reactions of the « leftists », even when they criticize this or that action of the Armed Forces Movement or, in a general way, the complete submission of the P.S.P. and the P.C.P. before the established order, their only result is to encourage the destructive — and in the long run fatal — illusion that opportunism can still be useful in a revolutionary process if the pressure of the masses and a tactic adopted to their « level of consciousness » compels it to do so.

In the dramatic situation created by all these factors, there are two fundamental tasks of the revolutionary vanguard: first of all to pursue the formation and the strengthening of an autonomous class movement on the union level, on the basis of the physical defense of the workers, whatever its form; and secondly the constitution of a party which concedes nothing to the theory of « intermediary » stages neither in the popular sense of the various Stalinist currents nor in the sense of « springboards » intended to facilitate something which they would never permit: the destruction of the bourgeois state.

● Mise au point à propos de certains « dépassseurs de marxisme »

About Certain « Surpassors of Marxism »

The first step towards the deformation, and later the destruction, of Marxism as the science of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat is to make the collective heritage of a political movement, of a party, the heritage of an

individual which can be claimed by individuals. This is the task of the solitary author of the editions ad usum Delphini of Amadeo Bordiga or of his biographical reconstructions. The kernel of these attempts to castrate the militant, impersonal character of the most rigorous Marxist tradition resides in the fact that some would like to « update » its theoretical basis through the antidiialectical and even metaphysical use of formulations which are rich in meaning, provided that they are placed in the context in which they were built as weapons of struggle. By proceeding in this way, capital can very naturally be transformed into a simple « idea », the historical task of the destruction of the capitalist regime can be conferred to an imaginary « universal class » and the party-guide of the proletarian revolution can be reduced to a shapeless idea, to a bloodless body, to a thing without substance.

These pseudo-philosophical exercises would not even deserve to be a subject of our criticism if, as always, they did not present themselves as attractive and bold innovations (for the pretendedly « Marxist » intellectuals of course) or, on the contrary, as a falsely humble fidelity to the « true » thought of authentic communist militants or to the spirit, if not the letter, of their work. It is solely for this reason — and we certainly will not make this a habit — that our review has had to deal with this matter.

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EL PROGRAMA COMUNISTA N° 18

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Seit Juni 1974, erscheint dieses Bulletin dreimonatlich.

The International Communist Party

What distinguishes the International Communist Party is the integral reaffirmation of the Marxist doctrine — restored by Lenin and forming the basis of the foundation of the Third International — as the *only* and *compulsory* path to the emancipation of the working class and consequently to socialism.

This path has its beginning in the reality of the incurable antagonism between the productive forces and the bourgeois relations of production, which is the basis of the no less incurable antagonism between the capitalist class and the working class. It passes through the revolutionary destruction of the bourgeois state to the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship ; this dictatorship is the instrument for defending the conquered power and repressing the attempts by the defeated class to reconquer it, and it also is the weapon for despotically intervening in the economy in order to initiate its transformation from capitalism to socialism.

The indispensable organ for preparing the working class for the revolutionary conquest of power and for the exercise of dictatorship after that conquest can only be the party. It has in its doctrine the general vision not only of communist society, the material basis of which is created by capitalism itself, but also of the historical path leading towards its realization ; it embodies in its program the permanent, international interests of the class which is called upon to be the midwife of the new society ; and it establishes, according to those aims and interests, its own invariant strategy, its own well-defined tactics and its own rigorously centralized organization. These strategy and tactics — the basic foundation of which was consistently defended in the West solely by the Communist Left (the founders of the Communist Party of Italy in 1921) in their struggle against the Stalinist deterioration of the International — are necessarily anti-democratic and anti-parliamentary, anti-gradualistic and anti-reformist, anti-collaborationist and anti-nationalist. They are therefore directly opposed not only to classic reformism but also to its Stalinist variety (whether it be « Russian » or « Chinese ») and to the related theorizations of socialism in one country, national peaceful ways to socialism, interclass blocs, and democratic and antifascist popular fronts in peace or in war. On the other hand, they clearly differentiate themselves from the conceptions of a number of currents which recognize or pretend to recognize the necessity of revolutionary violence and of

class dictatorship but which fall back, in their critic of Stalinism, into the negation of the central role of the communist party in the proletarian revolution ; in negating this they destroy the basis for the proletariat's preparation of the revolutionary assault and for the establishment and exercise of the red dictatorship and of red terror.

The necessity of defending and proclaiming this monolithical construction — no part of which can be abandoned without the whole collapsing — is confirmed by the fall of the parties of the Second International into the *Union Sacrée* during the first imperialist war and into open democratism and ministerialism between the wars ; it is also demonstrated by the catastrophy of the Stalinized Third International and by the world triumph of an imperialism in democratic clothing and of its pillar and policeman, the United States. The international vanguard of the proletariat, the single world Communist Party, can be recreated and reorganized only around this theoretical and programmatic construction, if a way is to finally be open out of the longest and most terrible counter-revolution of contemporary history.

SOME PUBLICATIONS OF THE ICP

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A comprehensive reappraisal of the formative process of a revolutionary Left wing within the Italian Socialist Party which gave rise to a definitely communist group. This group expressed the tendency which led towards the foundation of a party fulfilling all requirements established by the historical experience of Bolshevism and as stated by the Third International. Documentation is given supporting the essential statement that the theoretical and practical activity displayed by the real founders of the Communist Party of Italy, was a consistent application of some critical points of Marxist strategy and tactics — as restored by Lenin's work — to a specific and indeed typical western situation.

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- In German : The Party's Essential Theses of 1951 are published under the title **Grundthesen der Partei** in our booklet **Was heisst es, den Marxismus zu verteidigen ?** - ref. D 5 - \$ 2.50 or £ 1.00
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